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## NEW MUSIC ISSUE

### *Eric Whitacre*

From YouTube to chapel:  
the composer's compelling sound world

### *John Adams*

What being alive in  
modern America sounds like

### *Harrison Birtwistle*

Why the modern radical is  
entranced by John Dowland

*'I've approached the  
world of new music  
as an outsider'*

*Eric Whitacre*



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Joining the Russian baritone  
as he records in Moscow





# March highlights

from EMI and Virgin Classics



## Spotlight release



## Verdi: La Traviata (DVD) Natalie Dessay

This production, directed by Jean-François Sivadier, captures Dessay's European début as Violetta at the 2011 Aix-en-Provence Festival. With Violetta, Dessay makes the transition from coloratura to the more full-blooded lyric repertoire alongside Charles Castronovo (Alfredo), Ludovic Tézier (Giorgio Germont) and the London Symphony Orchestra. The opera is staged in the exquisite Théâtre de l'Archevêché with its huge spiral staircases, medieval arches and 18th century wings.

*"Dessay overwhelms with her fragility and commitment. The singers have their roles in their every fibre ... the characters exist with a palpable intensity."* **Le Figaro**

## Also new this month



## Rossini: Le Comte Ory (DVD)

**Diana Damrau, Joyce DiDonato**

The "terrific cast" of Juan Diego Flórez, Diana Damrau and Joyce DiDonato produces vocal and theatrical fireworks in Bartlett Sher's "lively, colorful and inventive production" of Rossini's *Le Comte Ory* at New York's Metropolitan Opera.



## The Peacemakers

**Karl Jenkins**

This new choral work offers inspiration and solace for a time in need of both. Featured are texts from great peacemakers Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, the Dalai Lama, and a specially written contribution by Terry Waite.



## Beethoven Piano Concertos 3 & 4

**Aldo Ciccolini**

Beethoven's 3rd and 4th concertos here performed in a live recording from 2008 by legendary pianist Aldo Ciccolini – the very first time he has committed these works to disc.



## Home of Opera

Among the 11 new offerings in this mid-price collection are *Il turco in Italia*, *L'amico Fritz* and *L'enfant et les sortilèges*. Each title contains a printed introduction and a bonus disc with synopsis and libretto with translations.



## British Composers

Three new titles in the acclaimed series; *The Lark Ascending* – a 2CD collection of evergreen string music by Vaughan Williams, Elgar, Delius and others, plus two 5CD anthologies comprising the major works of Sir William Walton and *The Very Best of English Song*.



## Electrola Collection

Five more titles in the Electrola Collection series from the EMI Germany vaults including Medieval Music from *The Way of St. James*, *Passions-Pasticcio* and *Intermezzi & concerti for the Medici Wedding 1589*.



# Sounds of America

Gramophone's guide to the classical scene in the US and Canada



Focus Universe Symphony – page I » The Scene Musical highlights – page IV » Recording reviews – page IX



PHOTOGRAPHY: SUSAN ADCKOCK

Guerrero, Austin and the Nashville Symphony take on Ives's 'inhuman challenge'

## IVES'S ANSWERED QUESTION

The Universe Symphony was never finished, but composer Larry Austin and the Nashville Symphony are giving New York the chance to hear how it might have sounded, writes Philip Kennicott

Late last year, the science world was aflutter with the possibility that an elusive particle known as the Higgs boson had finally been discovered. Essential to explaining some of the most elemental forces in nature, the Higgs boson is often called 'the God particle'. And yet, even as scientists parsed what had been learnt in a new round of experiments, they spoke cautiously: it may be there; we hope to be certain; give us more time.

Imagine, then, the world Charles Ives lived in more than a century ago, when he began an enormous study in musical cosmology now known as his *Universe Symphony*. The desire to know the universe, its inner workings, its mysterious coherence, its unknowable vastness, and man's role in its unfolding was as strong as it is today. But evolution was relatively new, quantum theory was in its infancy and the radical challenge of Einstein's 1905 *annus mirabilis*, which introduced the world to special relativity, was still being digested. God sat precariously on His perch, still the first and final cause for everything – but in an evermore remote or allegorical way, no longer the material craftsman that Haydn celebrated in *The Creation*.

Ives's *Universe Symphony*, conceived in 1915 yet unfinished when he died in 1954, was a composer's effort to contain, register and record the infinitude and mystery which still preoccupy students of our multidimensional, ever-expanding, increasingly mysterious 'multiverse' today. It is one of the great might-have-beens of Ives's career and a source of perennial fascination to scholars of his music, yet it remains little known and its fragments rarely performed. The sheer ambition of the work, its complexity, and its almost mythic status among Ives devotees, has made it naturally (and dangerously) attractive to the Nashville Symphony, who will perform a realisation of the score by composer Larry Austin at Carnegie Hall in May. It will be the New York premiere of the work, and a major event both for New York music lovers and the Nashville Symphony, which is striving to maintain its stellar reputation for devotion to American and contemporary music at a time when too many orchestras have fallen back on the last resort of lean times: a dwindling repertoire of familiar classics. 'This is our DNA, this is who we are,' says conductor Giancarlo Guerrero of his orchestra, which has built an impressive catalogue of new American music on the Naxos label over the past decade.

But the *Universe Symphony* is beyond the usual challenges of new music. One interpretation of the notes Ives left behind for the four-part work – which depicts a gradual organisation of chaos into the world, the firmament and the spiritual realms – calls for some 4500 musicians. Another requires multiple orchestras to play from different mountain tops. Its combination of mystical and musical ambition is reminiscent of another contemporaneous cosmological work, also left unfinished at its composer's death: Scriabin's monumental *Mysterium*.

Guerrero, however, thinks more in terms of Mahler, who died in 1911, shortly before Ives began formulating what he eventually called a 'universe in tones'. If Mahler believed that 'to write a symphony is to create a world', Ives strived to capture that creation dynamically, in real time, a sonic picture of the creation as it was unfolding. As with Scriabin and Mahler (especially in the latter's *Symphony No 8*), the ambition



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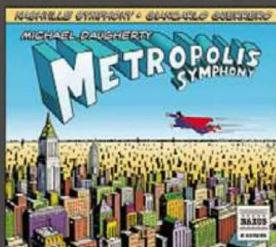
Giancarlo Guerrero



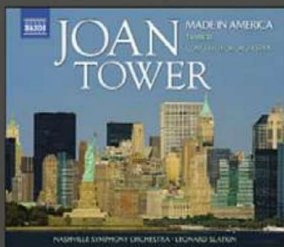
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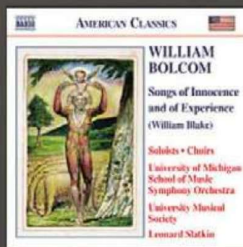
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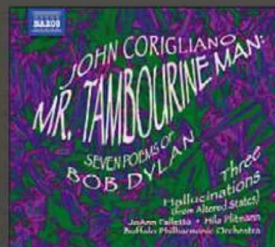
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was to be realised through the grandest of means. But unlike Mahler's efforts at musical cosmology, which remained fundamentally connected to the central-European musical inheritance of the 19th century, Ives's *Universe Symphony* transcended any regnant definition of music. It would be 'a presentation and contemplation in tones, rather than in music (as such)', the composer wrote, as if he was imagining the orchestra as a kind of metaphysical photographic paper, or X-ray film, capturing 'with tonal imprints the vastness, the evolution of all life'.

There won't be 4500 musicians when Guerrero brings his Nashville forces to Carnegie, nor will there be any performing from mountain tops. Realisations of the *Universe Symphony* (there are at least three, in various states of completion) are all about making the mystical manageable. 'This was mostly a concept of what Ives was trying to achieve,' says Guerrero of the more grandiose descriptions in Ives's sketches. 'Ives also knew that, because of his dream, it would be impossible. It would be a nice ideal and it is wonderful to dream that big. We want to think big and get as close as possible to that effect. But he obviously never finished the piece.'

That's where Austin comes in. A student of Milhaud and Imbrie, the Texas-based composer is a longtime practitioner of electroacoustic and computer music. Like most US composers, Austin has Ives in his blood, and with the centenary of Ives's birth in 1974 he found himself thinking a lot about the pioneer of American experimental music. He was also thinking about a commission from the American Brass Quintet. Among the elements Ives hoped to fuse together in the *Universe Symphony* is what Austin calls 'a stratum of brass'. The quintet commission became a means to grapple with Ives's sketches, a preoccupation that lasted from 1974 until Austin finished a full realisation of the symphony in 1993.

*'In case I don't get to finishing this, somebody might like to try to work out the idea' – Charles Ives*

Austin's skill with computer music helped him solve one of the thorniest challenges called for among Ives's notes: the fiendishly complex polyrhythms that form the musical material of the work's prelude, and then continue as a kind of rhythmic ground bass throughout the next three movements. This 'life pulse' prelude elaborated on polyrhythmic ideas found in works such as *All the Way Around and Back* (1906), which built up and then dismantled layers of rhythmic ratios in prime-number patterns (1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 11) in a dizzying musical palindrome. But the complexity called for in the *Universe Symphony* was beyond anything in any previous Ives work, and arguably beyond any hope of actual realisation in performance. It was, perhaps, 'meant to be imagined, not performed', scholar Stuart Feder has written.

Austin has used click tracks (a tape recording of metronome beats) to help percussionists manage the 20 separate musical lines. Ives might well have approved of this technological solution to his almost inhuman challenge. 'He knew about electric metronomes,' says Austin, referring to a device called the Rhythmicon invented by Henry Cowell (who wrote some of the best accounts of Ives and his efforts to complete the *Universe Symphony*). But the Rhythmicon didn't have 20 different channels, and even with the use of Austin's click tracks it takes multiple conductors to manage the piece in performance; to this end, Guerrero will be joined by four others at Carnegie Hall to help manage the various subsections of the orchestra.

For Guerrero, the click tracks make the work practicable, but they also limit the impact of the conductor on the performance. 'I have no control over the tempo,' he says. 'This is not a piece about *rubatos*. The conductor is there almost as a mechanical part of the piece.' But he isn't

just a hi-tech traffic cop. 'The things that I can shape are the balances and the textures; I can bring out the things that I believe are telling the stories of the individual moments, and that has been a lot of fun.'

The experience for the musicians is no less disorienting. Sam Bacco, principal percussionist of the Nashville Symphony, has hired 18 extra percussionists to fill out the orchestra's ranks. He's lucky to have veterans of Nashville's country music and pop studios to call on, as well as the city's ample complement of universities. Working with click tracks, however, creates a very unusual performance environment. 'Part of the challenge is to ignore everyone else, yet pay attention at the same time,' he says. He recommends that his players tune in and out of the click track, to keep a sense of the bigger musical picture around them.

Despite the enormous amount of scholarly attention and musical efforts to bring the piece alive, the *Universe Symphony* remains as elusive as the Higgs boson, more a source of questions and speculation than certainty. Ives said, 'In case I don't get to finishing this, somebody might like to try to work out the idea.' But did he mean work out the specifics of his ideas, the musical formula and the meaning of the scattered material contained in the 49 pages of sketches; or the general concept of the piece? The two most frequently used realisations of the piece, Austin's and one created by Johnny Reinhard in 1996, differ greatly, including in the basic understanding of how fast the 'life pulse' is meant to be. And while there's extensive information about the prelude and the first section of the score, the details get progressively sketchier, so that 'realisations' of the last two movements are essentially inspired guesswork.

But the biggest question may be about the role that this piece played in Ives's creative life. Was it the summation of everything he had hoped to achieve as a composer? Or was it perhaps an idea so ethereal and unmanageable that it essentially reduced the composer to silence? There are scattered accounts of Ives's attempts to expand the work over the long years after he retreated from making music publicly. 'On rare occasions he would add a few notes to his *Universe Symphony*, a work he had planned from the beginning to leave unfinished,' wrote Cowell. And so it takes on the character of a Borgesian fable: a black hole of creative energies, ever more dense, never finished, and perhaps never meant to be. **G**

*The Nashville Symphony give the New York premiere of Ives's Universe Symphony, realised by Larry Austin, at Carnegie Hall on Saturday May 12 at 7:30pm; for more information, visit [carnegiehall.org](http://carnegiehall.org)*

## AUSTIN'S UNIVERSE SYMPHONY: RECOMMENDED LISTENING



**Ives: Universe Symphony (realised Austin)**  
Cincinnati PO; CCM Percussion Ensemble;  
CCM Chamber Choir / Gerhard Samuel  
Centaur Records © CRC2205



**Ives: Universe Symphony (realised Austin)**  
Saarbrücken Radio SO / Michael Stern  
Col Legno © WWEICD20074

## FURTHER LISTENING



**Ives: Universe Symphony (realised Reinhard)**  
American Festival of Microtonal Music Orchestra /  
Johnny Reinhard  
Stereo Society © SS007



**'An American Diary'**  
Mike Mainieri *perc et al*  
Includes Mainieri's percussion fantasy,  
*In the Universe of Ives*, based on Ives's ideas  
NYC Records © NYC6105-2





# THE SCENE

In a month awash with pianists, Uchida and Hough both pop up twice – the latter also as composer; an ambitious new *Ring* cycle from the Met; and a staged *Pierrot Lunaire* from Eighth Blackbird



A scene from the Met's new production of *Götterdämmerung*, showing the movable slats that are raised or lowered during the performance to create different stage surfaces

## WASHINGTON DC

### **The Kennedy Center**

**Kennedy Center Chamber Players (April 1)**

**Hamelin: Chopin and Alkan (April 2)**

**Eighth Blackbird: *Pierrot Lunaire* (April 3)**

As usual, there's much on offer at the Kennedy Center, but April brings some notable solo and chamber concerts. The Kennedy Center Chamber Players perform septets by Stravinsky and Saint-Saëns, as well as Martinů's progressive jazz-ballet sextet *La revue de cuisine*. The next day, pianist Marc-André Hamelin makes a case for the neglected 19th-century pianist-composer Valentin Alkan in a concert that pairs some of his works with those of his contemporary Chopin. The concert, entitled *The Enigma of Paris*, highlights connections between the artistic language and musical friendship of the two men. The thrilling and provocative Eighth Blackbird sextet show up a day later to present a staged cabaret-opera version of Schoenberg's masterpiece *Pierrot Lunaire*, with the players taking up important roles in the drama. The ensemble also present works by Weill, Berg and George Perle (one of Schoenberg's greatest American followers).

[kennedy-center.org](http://kennedy-center.org)

## NEW YORK

### **Metropolitan Opera**

**Wagner: *Ring* cycle (April 4 – May 12)**

The Metropolitan Opera bills its new multimillion-dollar *Ring* cycle as 'the most ambitious production the Met has ever attempted'. There will be three complete cycles during April and into May. This new production was created by Robert Lepage, the Canadian stage, opera and *Cirque de Soleil* director known for his visual brilliance. It uses a hi-tech set, involving a 45-tonne hydraulic machine that controls moving planks on stage and featuring vivid images projected onto the stage to create scenery. Most importantly, the Met has some of the world's finest Wagnerian singers on hand, including Deborah Voigt, Bryn Terfel, Stephanie Blythe, Jay Hunter Morris and Eric Owens – with Fabio Luisi conducting.

[metoperafamily.org](http://metoperafamily.org)

## BOSTON

### **Boston Symphony Orchestra**

**Dohnányi conducts Brahms's *Requiem* (April 5-7)**

**Salonen and Stravinsky (April 12-14)**

**Haitink: Beethoven symphonies (April 18 – May 5)**

Since James Levine stepped down as Boston's music director last year, the Boston Symphony Orchestra has been keeping its season lively with a series of guest conductors. In April, Christoph von Dohnányi leads them in Brahms's *German Requiem*, with the help of some youthful soloists: Austrian-born soprano Anna Prohaska in her BSO debut, and the young German bass-baritone Hanno Müller-Brachmann. Former LA Phil music director Esa-Pekka Salonen continues his US tour, presenting his celebrated Violin Concerto played by Leila Josefowicz, for whom he wrote it. He concludes the programme with Stravinsky's complete *Firebird* ballet score. Then BSO conductor emeritus Bernard Haitink begins three weeks of programmes – which spill over into May – to conclude the 2011-12 season. These include Mendelssohn's complete incidental music to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, featuring popular English actress Claire Bloom as narrator. Over these weeks, Haitink and the orchestra also present three of Beethoven's symphonies – Nos 1, 6 and 9.

[bso.org](http://bso.org)





## LOS ANGELES

### Los Angeles Philharmonic

**Adams conducts Adams and Glass (April 5-7)**  
**Sublime Schubert (April 16-18, 20-22)**

John Adams leads the LA Phil in a performance of his extraordinary Violin Concerto, which requires the soloist to play without pause and uses the orchestra as a musical backdrop. It is performed by Leila Josefowicz, busy later in the month with Salonen (see previous entry). During the latter half of the month the orchestra celebrate Schubert as part of their Sublime Schubert series. Baritone Matthias Goerne and pianist Christoph Eschenbach join forces to present *Winterreise* and *Die schöne Müllerin*. Members of the orchestra perform an all-Schubert chamber concert including the *Rosamunde* String Quartet. Lastly, Eschenbach leads the orchestra in a programme of orchestrated Schubert songs (sung by Goerne) and the *Great* Symphony No 9 in C.

[laphil.com](http://laphil.com)

## CLEVELAND

### Cleveland Orchestra

**Uchida plays Mozart (April 5-7)**  
**Lang Lang plays Bartók (April 26-28)**

Two great pianists grace the stage of Severance Hall at either end of April. Mitsuko Uchida, who has appeared with the Cleveland Orchestra more than 80 times, returns to play two of Mozart's cherished piano concertos - No 9 (*Jeunehomme*) in E flat, K271, and No 21 in C, K467. She conducts from the keyboard. Later in the month, Lang Lang brings his ebullient energy to the stage when he plays Bartók's Piano Concerto No 1 - a piece of music that was written by a virtuoso for a virtuoso. Music director Franz Welser-Möst conducts the programme, which also includes Bruckner's *Romantic* Symphony No 4.

[clevelandorchestra.com](http://clevelandorchestra.com)

## US TOUR

**The Knights (April 5-20)**

The Knights - a youthful and dynamic chamber orchestra based in Brooklyn, NY - favour mixing traditional repertoire with more adventurous fare. In April, this supremely talented ensemble, led by conductor Eric Jacobsen, are touring the US with works from their 2010 album 'New Worlds'. This repertoire includes music by Dvořák, Copland, Ives and Osvaldo Golijov, plus a recent piece by Gabriela Lena Frank:



The Knights - shown here during a performance at the Angel Orensanz Foundation - embark on a US tour in April

*Leyendas: An Andean Walkabout*, for string quartet, mixes elements from Western classical music with groove-driven Andean folksongs. The tour takes in Troy and Rockville, NY, Akron and Granville, OH, Richmond, KY, Sewanee, TN, Columbus and Athens, GA, and Amherst, MA.

[theknightsnyc.com](http://theknightsnyc.com)

## INDIANAPOLIS

### Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra

**Stephen Hough (April 6-7)**  
**Vive la France! (April 20-21)**

British pianist Stephen Hough comes to the Midwest as both performer and composer. He's in town for the world premiere of his *Missa Mirabilis*, commissioned by the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. In the same programme he performs Mendelssohn's Piano Concerto No 1, with Nicholas McGegan conducting. Two weeks later, the orchestra present concerts celebrating French music, including two pieces inspired by the sights and sounds of Spain: Ravel's *Rapsodie espagnole*, whose orchestration evokes the Spanish musical heritage imparted to the composer by his mother, and Debussy's 'Ibéria' from *Images*. Also on the programme is Saint-Saëns's

Violin Concerto No 3, played by Russian-born Alina Ibragimova. The conductor is Jun Märkl.

[indianapolissymphony.org](http://indianapolissymphony.org)

## NEW YORK

### Carnegie Hall

**Mitsuko Uchida (April 11)**  
**Richard Goode (April 25)**  
**Maurizio Pollini (April 29)**

Three masters of the piano grace the Stern Auditorium in April, as part of Carnegie Hall's Keyboard Virtuoso and Great Artists series. Uchida performs Schubert's last three piano sonatas: in C minor, D958; in A, D959; and in B flat, D960. Towards the end of the month, Goode plays works by Schumann (including *Kinderszenen*, Op 15 and *Kreisleriana*, Op 16) and Chopin (including Ballade No 3 in A flat, Op 47). Later that week Pollini continues with more 19th-century masterworks: a selection of pieces by Chopin, including Scherzo No 3; and works by Liszt, including the virtuosic Sonata in B minor, and pieces that were written much later in the composer-pianist's career, when the music became dark, sinister and altogether more dissonant.

[carnegiehall.org](http://carnegiehall.org)





Hough: continues his US tour with Rachmaninov

## PHILADELPHIA

### Philadelphia Orchestra

**Bronfman and Petrushka (April 12-14)**

**Tchaikovsky: Symphony No 4 (April 19-21)**

**Simon Rattle (April 26, 28 & 29)**

The Philadelphia Orchestra hosts a series of guest conductors through the month. Firstly, Gilbert Varga teams up with pianist Yefim Bronfman to present Bartók's Second Piano Concerto, a demanding work for soloist and orchestra alike, to be followed by Stravinsky's *Petrushka*. A week later, maestro Jaap van Zweden leads the orchestra in an account of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 4. This piece is presented as part of the Beyond the Score series, which was created by Gerard McBurney to offer audiences an in-depth multimedia exploration of the score, thus providing musical and historical context. McBurney narrates. Later in the month, Simon Rattle makes a rare guest appearance to lead the orchestra in the third symphonies of Brahms and Schumann. Sandwiched in between these sweeping 19th-century works are Webern's *Six Pieces for Orchestra* (1910) – minimalist pieces that are nonetheless designed to showcase the sonic scope of an orchestra.

[philorch.org](http://philorch.org)

## ATLANTA

### Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

**Shaham: Bach and Stravinsky,**

**plus Ailyn Pérez: Poulenc (April 12, 14 & 15)**

**Yuja Wang: Rachmaninov No 3 (April 19-21)**

The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra promises quite a starry April with a range of guest soloists mid-month. Violinist Gil Shaham joins the orchestra to continue his ongoing exploration of 'Violin Concertos of the 1930s' by performing the Stravinsky Concerto (1931), which he recently recorded with the BBC SO. He also performs Bach's Violin Concerto in E, BWV1042. In the same rich programme, the orchestra present Poulenc's setting of *Gloria* for large orchestra, chorus and solo soprano. Rising star American soprano Ailyn Pérez is the soloist. A few days later, virtuoso Chinese pianist Yuja Wang breezes into town to present the supremely demanding Rachmaninov Piano Concerto No 3, led by guest maestro Roberto Abbado.

[atlantasymphony.org](http://atlantasymphony.org)



PHOTOGRAPHY: HIROYUKI ITO

## HOUSTON

### Houston Grand Opera

**Verdi: Don Carlos (April 13, 15, 19, 22 & 28)**

**Donizetti: Mary Stuart (April 21, 27, 29 / May 2, 4)**

The Houston Grand Opera brings its season to a close with a pair of royal dramas. Verdi's *Don Carlos* – the quintessential grand opera – features tenor Brandon Jovanovich as Don Carlos, and sopranos Tamara Wilson and Christine Goerke in the leading female roles. This production directed by John Caird was premiered in 2005 by the Welsh National Opera. April also brings the Minnesota Opera production of Donizetti's *bel canto* tragedy *Mary Stuart*, directed by Kevin Newbury. Mezzo Joyce DiDonato, lauded for her *bel canto* brilliance, sings the lead role. Patrick Summers – named artistic and music director of the HGO last year – leads the orchestra.

[houstongrandopera.org](http://houstongrandopera.org)

## ST LOUIS

### St Louis Symphony

**Fleisher plays Ravel (April 14 & 15)**

**Dvořák: Cello Concerto (April 20-22)**

**Stephen Hough: Rachmaninov concertos (April 27-29)**

Pianist Leon Fleisher has performed a great deal of left-handed repertoire over the years because of a rare condition that made him unable to use his right hand – something happily reversed again in recent years following treatment. Here's an opportunity to hear him play Ravel's *Piano Concerto for the Left Hand*, a jazz-inspired masterpiece written in 1929-30, and a concerto beloved by the pianist. Also on the programme is Prokofiev's richly

orchestrated *Scythian Suite*, which should bring out the best in the orchestra, led by music director David Robertson. The following week, Danny Lee, St Louis Symphony's principal cellist, performs the Dvořák Cello Concerto in a series of concerts that also feature Tchaikovsky's joyful *Little Russian* Symphony. At the end of the month, British pianist Stephen Hough continues his US tour with performances of Rachmaninov's Piano Concertos Nos 1 and 2. Concerto No 3 can be heard in early May (5 & 6).

[stlsymphony.org](http://stlsymphony.org)

## TORONTO

### Opera Atelier

**Lully: Armide (April 14, 15, 17, 18, 20 & 21)**

This 17th-century Baroque masterpiece by Jean-Baptiste Lully tells the story of the sorceress Armide, who falls in love with her sworn enemy Renaud. This is one of the early takes on the epic tale which inspired many more operas over the centuries. Toronto's Opera Atelier – renowned for lavish productions of 17th- and 18th-century opera, theatre and ballet – teamed up with the prestigious Glimmerglass Festival to create this production. This is a first opportunity to see it before it arrives in Cooperstown, NY, for its summer Glimmerglass run. *Armide* stars soprano Peggy Kriha Dye in the title-role, tenor Colin Ainsworth as the Christian knight Renaud, and bass João Fernandes as Hidraot, and features the full corps of Artists of Atelier Ballet.

[operaatelier.com](http://operaatelier.com)

**Previews by Damian Fowler**



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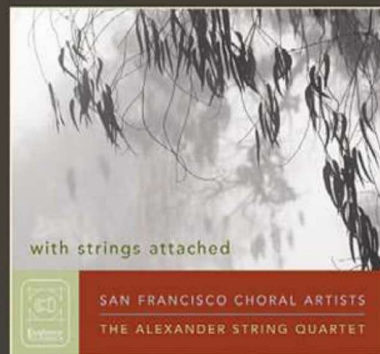
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**Tomás Luis de VICTORIA**  
SACRED MUSIC: GOD'S COMPOSER  
CHRISTOPHERS: CND/THE SIXTEEN

Broadcast on the BBC in December 2011, this special episode of the acclaimed *Sacred Music* series marks the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Spanish composer Tomás Luis de Victoria.

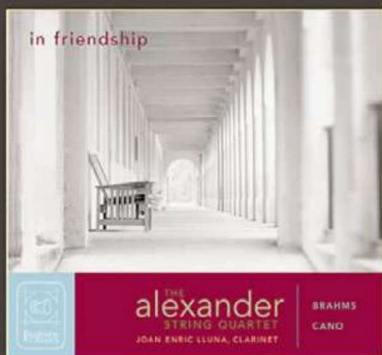
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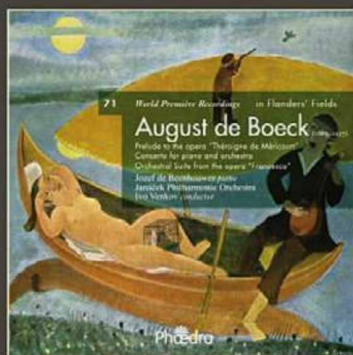
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# Reviews



**Laurence Vittes reviews  
Steven Mackey's *Lonely Motel*:**  
*'Mackey's seamless musical fabric engages  
the ear as if it were charting sonic events  
in a parallel universe'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE XIII**



**Jed Distler reviews Haydn, Liszt  
and Schubert from Gülsin Onay:**  
*'Anyone who begins a disc with a Liszt rarity  
is bound to capture at least one Gramophone  
reviewer's attention'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE XIII**

## Arensky

String Quartets – No 1, Op 11; No 2, Op 35.  
Piano Quintet, Op 51<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Adam Neiman *pf* Ying Quartet

Sono Luminus © DSL92143 (77' • DDD)



**Eastman's resident quartet  
in works by Rimsky's pupil**

For Arensky and friends, the end of the 19th century in Moscow and St Petersburg must have been heady days: his music is intoxicated with the gaiety and passion of life, its chance encounters and never-ending emotional thrills. This CD's centerpiece is the 30-minute Second Quartet, with its seven variations on a theme by Tchaikovsky, Arensky's mentor, as the second movement. In the less frequently heard of the two original scorings – two violins, viola and cello – the Ying Quartet lay out the breadth and sustaining power with elegance and ease. The other two works ingratiate themselves on smaller, more domestic scales, each including a variation movement in their scheme.

The Ying Quartet's feline focus and seamless ensemble create lines that flow, charm and interact in an entirely natural, unaffected manner, even during the music's occasional drifts into salon and sentiment. In the Piano Quintet, Adam Neiman spins out the display passages with dazzling facility and makes the most of his moments of *faux* emotional turbulence.

The recording is the first to be made in Sono Luminus's new studio, a 95-year-old stone church in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley; following in the tradition of American audiophile labels such as Dorian (which Sono Luminus now owns), the venue combines accuracy and clarity with a warm ambience and almost tangible texture. The ensemble, quartet-in-residence at the Eastman School of Music, discuss the music and the recording process in their engaging booklet-notes. **Laurence Vittes**

## Bonde

'Sound Spectrum'

*Fantasia*<sup>bd</sup>. *Three Elizabethan Songs*<sup>ab</sup>. *Three*



The Ying Quartet record Arensky at the new Sono Luminus studio in Shenandoah Valley, Virginia

*Elizabethan Songs Revisited*<sup>ab</sup>. *Symphony No 1*<sup>d</sup>.  
*Rose Window*<sup>bc</sup>. *Sonus I*<sup>b</sup>. *Four Shakespeare  
Songs*<sup>ab</sup>. *You Were the One*<sup>ab</sup>. *Encore Blues*<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Mara Bonde *sop* <sup>b</sup>Allen Bonde, <sup>c</sup>Maria Kushmerick  
*Bonde pfs* <sup>d</sup>Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra /  
Toshiyuki Shimada

Navona © NV5862 (66' • DDD)



**Family portrait from the former  
Mount Holyoke professor**

It's not every composer who has either the interest or resources to revisit previous musical inspirations but Allen Bonde, blessed as he is with a pianist wife and a soprano daughter, apparently has everything he needs close by. A particular highlight of this musical family gathering are two competing settings of the same texts, entitled *Three Elizabethan Songs* (1965) and *Three Elizabethan Songs Revisited* (1991), where the elegant simplicity of Bonde's

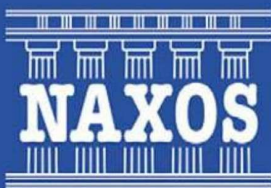
initial conception – written for a student, the composer reveals in his notes – gives way to a more theatrically developed virtuosity, resulting in equally compelling works.

Little of that verve, however, is noticeable in Bonde's *Fantasia* (1961), a pseudo-concerto for piano and orchestra from early in the composer's career that opens the recording with largely unfulfilled promise.

More rewarding on the orchestral front, both structurally and emotionally, is his two-movement *Symphony No 1* (1968), which articulates its loosely designed 12-tone schematic with impressive timbral variety.

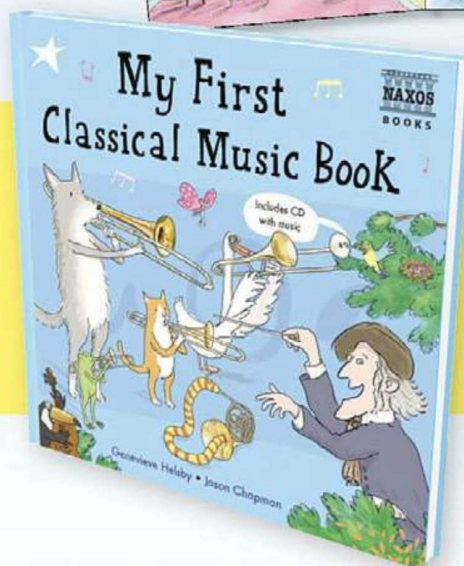
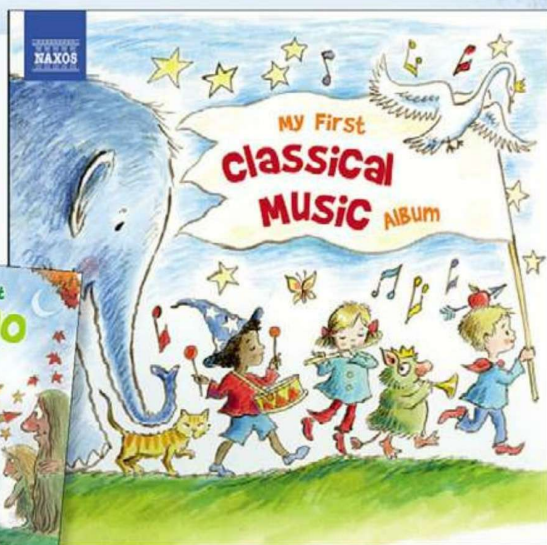
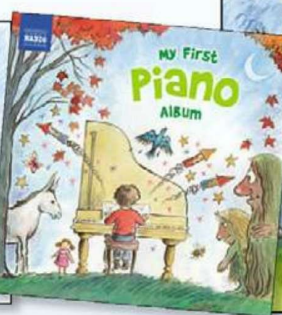
On a purely musical level, Bonde's piano music falls somewhere between his songs and symphonic works. Whether solo, as in *Sonus I* (1972), or duo, as in *Rose Window* (2001) – performed with his wife Maria Kushmerick and written for the unveiling of the rose window in the chapel of Mount Holyoke College, where





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the composer is professor emeritus – Bonde has a way of harnessing a wide range of modernist influences into a structure that can still often sound spontaneously random. Ultimately, though, that range becomes rather a fault. After picking out Bartók, Berg, Stravinsky and Webern, one is still left looking for more of Bonde himself.

Ken Smith

## Brahms • Smetana

**Brahms** Piano Trio No 1, Op 8

**Smetana** Piano Trio, Op 15

**Weiss-Kaplan-Newman Trio**

Bridge © BRIDGE9362 (66' • DDD)



### Trios from the ensemble formerly known as Sequenza

The works that the Weiss-Kaplan-Newman Trio play on their new disc were born out of struggle. Brahms was dissatisfied with the original version of his Trio No 1 in B major, Op 8, and revised it extensively. Smetana composed his Trio in G minor, Op 15, soon after the death of his four-year-old daughter. Each score is filled with intensely emotional material, for different reasons. It is to the high credit of these superlative musicians that they don't stint on the dramatic and poetic qualities.

The Brahms, played in the final version, receives a performance of warm and sweeping beauty, along with impish grace in the *Scherzo*. In the slow movement, every phrase is vibrantly sculpted and placed within the context of the eloquent conversations. The ensemble brings blazing clarity to balances that are so crucial to texture and interplay, with Mark Kaplan's soaring violin and Clancy Newman's firmly assertive cello lines boldly complementing Yael Weiss's authoritative pianism.

Smetana pours out a range of feelings in his trio, which bears his distinctive lyrical urgency. Cast in three movements (curiously minus a slow movement), the score broods and sings, dances and rages. The second movement juxtaposes folksy charm with sweetness. Given the circumstances surrounding its creation, the piece could prompt interpreters to go overboard in the expressivity department. Weiss, Kaplan and Newman take a more sensitive route, remaining keenly alert to nuance and dynamic contrasts while providing welcome and requisite quotas of passion.

Donald Rosenberg

## Helps

**Helps** Postlude<sup>a</sup>. Fantasy<sup>b</sup>. Piano Quartet<sup>c</sup>. Duo<sup>d</sup>.

Piano Quintet<sup>e</sup>. Trio I<sup>f</sup>. Trio II<sup>f</sup>. Shall We Dance<sup>g</sup>

**Mendelssohn** Schilflied, Op 71 No 4 (arr Helps)<sup>g</sup>

**Ireland** The Darkened Valley<sup>h</sup>. Love is a sickness

full of woes (arr Helps)<sup>g</sup> **Poulenc** Intermezzo, FP118<sup>g</sup>



Fierce and delicate: percussionist Ryan Scott plays music by Maki Ishii

**Godowsky** 53 Studies on the Chopin Etudes<sup>a</sup> – No 12; No 45<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Marieke Schneemann // Lars Wouters van den Oudenweijer <sup>cl</sup><sup>a</sup>Bernhard Krug <sup>hn</sup><sup>ce</sup>Ronald Carbone <sup>va</sup><sup>cde</sup>Frank Dodge <sup>vc</sup><sup>g</sup>Robert Helps, <sup>acde</sup>Naomi Niskala <sup>pf</sup><sup>f</sup>ATOS Trio (<sup>abce</sup>Annette von Hehn <sup>vn</sup>Stefan Heinemeyer <sup>vc</sup><sup>b</sup>Thomas Hoppe <sup>pf</sup>)

Naxos American Classics © ② 8 559696/7 (118' • DDD)

<sup>g</sup>Recorded live in Berlin



### Remembering the talent that was pianist-composer Helps

Both of Robert Helps's formidable artistic gifts are represented on this revealing two-disc collection. There's the composer of piquant and poetic chamber music, and there's the pianist who gave suppleness to his own works, as well as pieces by other composers. These complementary aspects paint a portrait of a bold musician with the facility to transform and illuminate in myriad styles. Helps (1928–2001) initially built a career as a pianist of remarkable acumen in contemporary music, including scores by his teachers, such as Roger Sessions. But his immersion in the past also can be heard on this collection in shapely and eloquent live performances of transcriptions of music by Godowsky, Ireland, Mendelssohn and Poulenc, as well as in Helps's richly layered 'Shall We Dance'.

The chamber music that spans nearly half a century provides glimpses into Helps's expansive compositional arsenal. Hints of Hindemith can be heard in the Postlude for horn, violin and piano (1964), while the long,

mystical lines in the Piano Quartet (1997) bear the influence of Scriabin. Still, Helps was no imitator. Whatever wisps of the Second Viennese School may float through several of the pieces, the music is always suffused with distinctive clarity, vehemence and pensive drama, as in the two arresting piano trios (from 1957 and 2000). Helps's close association with Spectrum Concerts Berlin can be discerned in the meticulously detailed performances by the ATOS Trio and an array of splendid colleagues. **Donald Rosenberg**

## Ishii

Saidoki (Demon), Op 86. Concertante, Op 79. Percussion Concerto, 'South - Fire - Summer', Op 95

**Ryan Scott** *perc* **Esprit Orchestra** / **Alex Pauk**  
Innova © INNOVA809 (52' • DDD)

Recorded live



### Scott's percussion versus Esprit's orchestra in live Ishii

The late Japanese composer Maki Ishii devoted much of his creative life to works featuring percussion that fuse Western and Eastern traditions. On his new recording, Ryan Scott is soloist in three pieces demonstrating Ishii's heightened skill at conjuring a spectrum of sonic worlds. These mesmerising scores find metallic and wooden percussion instruments alternating, blending and often entering into battle with the orchestra. The music veers from the most delicate washes of sound to cataclysmic eruptions. The demon that gives





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*Saidoki* its title is depicted through extremes of activity, bold juxtapositions and textures constantly in flux. As the soloist (portraying the demon) revels in fierce and delicate passagework on a panoply of instruments, the orchestra holds its own in Ishii's broad palette of colours.

In the *Concertante*, the solo marimba collaborates or collides with instruments played by six percussionists. The rhythms are complex, the atmospheres ethereal or shattering and the range of hues wide. Ishii provides intriguing contrasts through glistening, hollow and hard sonorities. The composer's universe is at its most expansive in the percussion concerto subtitled *South – Fire – Summer*, which melds Japanese and Western elements. The marimba again is prominent, along with numerous other percussion instruments, which the soloist plays in tandem with and against the orchestral forces.

At the centre of these live performances, Ryan Scott is a chameleon-like virtuoso who triumphs over the varied colouristic demands and technical challenges. Scott is joined by superb colleagues in the *Concertante* and elsewhere by the Esprit Orchestra, led by Alex Pauk, who make exceptionally lucid and powerful contributions.

Donald Rosenberg

## Mackey

Lonely Motel: Music from Slide

Eighth Blackbird with Rinde Eckert voc

Cedille © CDR90000 128 (57' • DDD)



### Eighth Blackbird's Lonely Motel project now on CD

There's something very Jimmy Buffett about the slide guitar opening of this extraordinary CD. It soon becomes apparent that the prevailing environment will be slanted towards something in the geeky poet intellectual vein, with a tip of the hat to a wide range of musical suspects that have become usual these days, including Dowland, Weill, Britten, Stravinsky, Piazzolla and The Beatles. From beginning to end, Steven Mackey's seamless musical fabric engages the ear as if it were charting sonic events in a shy and stuttering parallel universe.

It's all part of a vast yet cool and laid-back conspiracy cum semi-song-cycle based on Rinde Eckert's abstracted urban poems, sung by 'a lovelorn psychologist' (is there any other kind?) about reflection, loss, impermanence and decay; as the poems themselves are marginal gestures, the life the music brings to the words has a shadowy film noir palette. Put together by Eighth Blackbird with a surgeon's scalpel and a brilliant contribution from the charismatic Rinde, the effect is surprisingly moving for its being so basically unemotional.

The occasional beauty of the instrumental writing is one of *Slide*'s most striking features. Felicitous solos are given to all of the performers, woven into the ensemble: cellist Nicholas Photinos, flautist Tim Munro and percussionist Matthew Duvall make particularly striking contributions.

A great conglomeration of public and private interests (including the Ojai Music Festival in California, where *Slide* was premiered in June 2009) came together to fund this exhilarating project and the investment has yielded rich rewards. It shows Eighth Blackbird as a force for good, and as a serious artistic collaborator on a very high scale, where the music entertains and pleases, and then goes on to something that provokes and stimulates.

Laurence Vittes

## Weisman

Darkling

Maeve Höglund sop Hai-Ting Chinn mez Jon Garrison

ten Mark Uhlemann bass-bar Tom Chiu, Philip Payton

vns Kenji Bunch va Raman Ramakrishnan vc /

Brian Demaris

Albany © 2 TROY1315/16 (86' • DDD)



### Stefan Weisman's take on Rabinowitz's Holocaust poem

One could argue that the key difference between theatre and opera is the latter's potential to be more poetic. Obviously this is not always reflected in the final results, but when it comes to drawing a narrative line through disparate, often irreconcilable plot points, music does offer a solution that relies on neither verbal nor logical coherence. *Darkling* is that potential pushed to its logical extreme.

Originally a book-length poem, then a multimedia theatre piece, Anna Rabinowitz's tale of a Holocaust survivor rummaging through the scattered memorabilia of her murdered family spins a powerful, unsettled web, the often allusive nature of the story reflecting significant gaps in her own family history in the wake of Poland's Nazi occupation. Where Rabinowitz originally found a structural solution in an acrostic poem inspired by Thomas Hardy's *The Darkling Thrush*, composer Stefan Weisman mirrors that approach in his tight, emotionally mercurial score.

Through an interplay of spoken and sung text with a string quartet backdrop, Weisman unfolds his emotional tapestry with confident strokes, with this recording's superb audio production (headed by studio veteran Judith Sherman) resulting in something resembling a high-art radio drama. Periods of emotional darkness alternate with lush melodic passages, generally offering only partial light at best.

Be forewarned: the cumulative emotional weight of the piece, compounded by its lack of a linear story, make this a tough work to follow, particularly on first listening. But after a couple times through, the most crucial elements of the story become perfectly clear.

Ken Smith

## Gülsin Onay

Haydn Andante with Variations, HobXVII/6 Liszt Grande Marche d'Abdul Médjid-Khan, S403. Après une lecture du Dante, S161 No 7. La leggierezza, S144 No 2 Schubert Piano Sonata No 19, D958

Gülsin Onay pf

Sono Luminus © DSL92140 (77' • DDD)



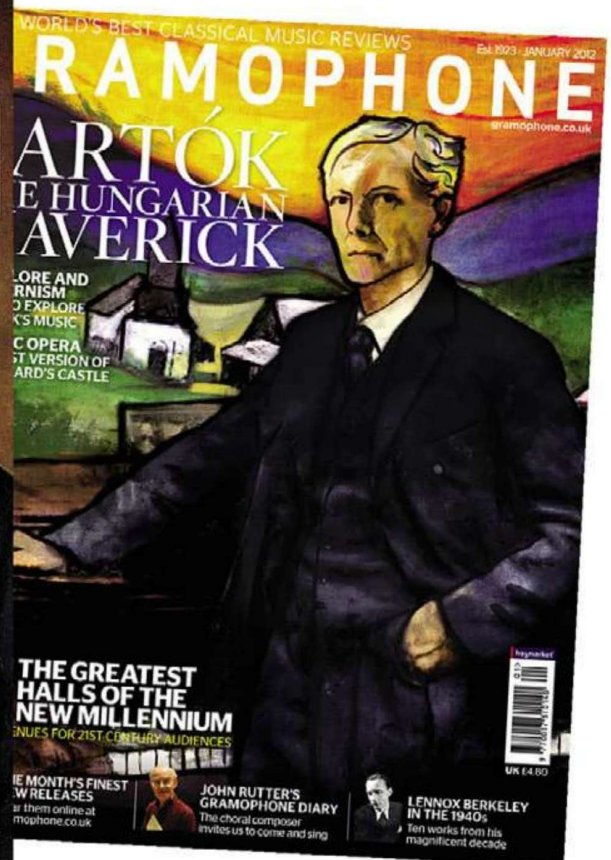
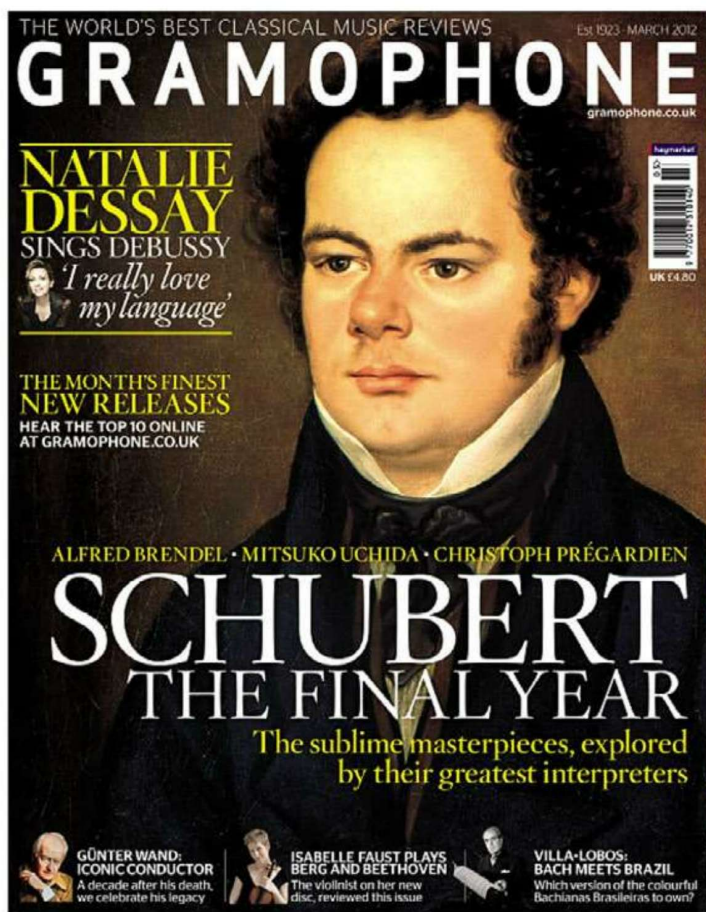
### Turkish pianist plays Liszt rarity and Schubert's C minor sonata

Anyone who begins a recital disc with an underrated Liszt rarity is bound to capture at least one *Gramophone* reviewer's attention. Turkish pianist Gülsin Onay does precisely that with her dazzling paraphrase of the *Grande Marche d'Abdul Médjid-Khan*, composed by Giuseppe Donizetti (younger brother of Gaetano) for the Sultan Abdul Médjid-Khan's coronation. Onay does her best work in the climactic chordal runs and trills before the final section, although her pacing for the *Tempo di marcia* is more measured than Liszt's *alla breve animato* directive suggests, and she doesn't quite match Leslie Howard's rhythmic crispness in the work's introductory pages (*Hyperion*, 11/96). The next selection, Haydn's F minor Andante with Variations stands out for Onay's beautiful *legato* touch and supple handling of the composer's increasingly elaborate right-hand arabesques.

While Liszt's *Dante Sonata*'s brooding lyrical episodes benefit from Onay's evocative textural variety, her accurate but low-voltage octave work and limited dynamic range downsize the music's almost orchestral sweep, especially when measured against the drama and intensity one hears in recent versions by Louis Lortie (*Chandos*, 6/11), Bertrand Chamayou (*Naïve*) and Mykola Suk (*Music & Arts*). A similarly soft-grained profile rounds off the biting edges of Schubert's C minor Sonata's outer movements – think of the febrile Richter (Alto) or Brendel's first and finest traversal (*Brilliant Classics*). Following a neutral, matter-of-fact start, Onay's tone gains expression and nuance as the movement proceeds, spilling over into a sensitively shaped Minuet. She concludes the programme with a dreamy, beautifully inflected yet somewhat underplayed reading of Liszt's 'La leggierezza'. The engineering captures an attractive concert-hall ambience and the extensively detailed annotations couldn't be better. **Jed Distler**



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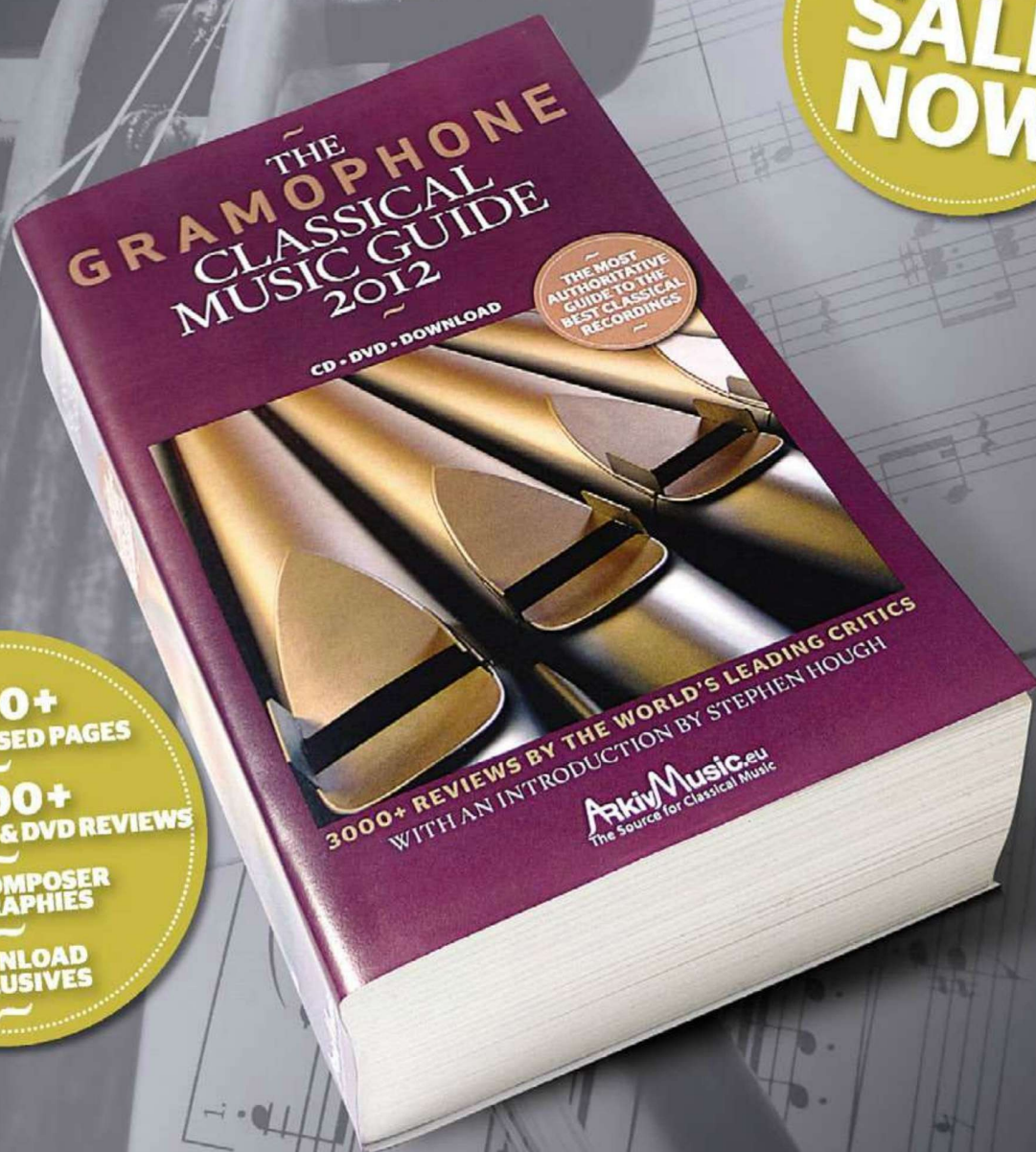
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## THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



'Why is so remarkable a work so difficult to bring off?' asks **RICHARD OSBORNE**, author of this month's Collection. The enigma that is Brahms's Third Symphony has interested this *Gramophone* reviewer for more years than he cares to remember, which is rather fortunate considering the hours of listening involved!



'In relation to the sacred music of the Renaissance, French chanson is very under-represented on disc,' says **FABRICE FITCH**, who wrote this month's Specialist's Guide. 'There's some wonderful music to be discovered and I felt it was important to point out to *Gramophone* readers how rich this art form can be.'



For **MICHAEL WHITE**, Eric Whitacre's story – a West Coast American with rock-star status moving in on English choral music and taking it somewhere unexpected – is an interesting development in contemporary classical culture. But on meeting him, he says, the question he most wanted to ask was: 'What happens next?'



FOR THE FULL LIST OF GRAMOPHONE REVIEWERS TURN TO PAGE 41 ►

# GRAMOPHONE

Founded in 1923 by Sir Compton Mackenzie and Christopher Stone as 'an organ of candid opinion for the numerous possessors of gramophones'

*New music: innovative and exciting – as always*



Now is an exciting time for new music – but then it generally always is. Occasionally, though, it's good to shout about it and, because it's often strongest in different fields at different times, to ask where the light is currently burning brightest. So, rather than try to attempt a survey of all new music, we've instead chosen to interview three composers who exemplify the most inspirational work taking place in three specific areas: Eric Whitacre, the West Coast American who has, through his luminous, layered sound and innovative use of new media, encouraged vast new audiences to the choral tradition – itself an area with a great appetite for new music; Sir Harrison Birtwistle, a British composer who, after a half-century-long career, retains an ever-questing thirst for musical exploration; and John Adams, whose ability to turn contemporary context into timeless art has placed a living composer firmly in the consciousness of the wider public, up there among authors, painters, architects – where they should be of course, but sadly often are not.

We've also used the phrase 'new music'; not, for example, 'contemporary classical'. 'Classical' is a useful but awkward term; most readers of *Gramophone* will have an instinctive idea of what it means, but may struggle to define it in a way that embraces the vast

*'Adams's ability to turn contemporary context into timeless art has placed a living composer firmly in the consciousness of the wider public'*

variety of music it includes. It also risks enclosing us behind a barrier, in a way that other contemporary art forms would not do.

Whitacre, Adams, Birtwistle. Worthy subjects, but ones which didn't leave room for exploring so many other geographical and stylistic areas, some of which are happily celebrated among this month's highlighted releases. Danish composer Poul Ruders; the reflective intensity of Russian Sofia Gubaidulina; Michel van der Aa, a Dutch cross-genre creator whose works entwine music, film and stage; and Finnish master Einojuhani Rautavaara, whose propulsive, mysterious percussion concerto *Incantations* is explored by the young virtuoso he wrote it for, Colin Currie, in *The Musician and the Score*: it's our Recording of the Month, and a superb way to crown our celebration of new music.



*Martin*

[martin.cullingford@haymarket.com](mailto:martin.cullingford@haymarket.com)

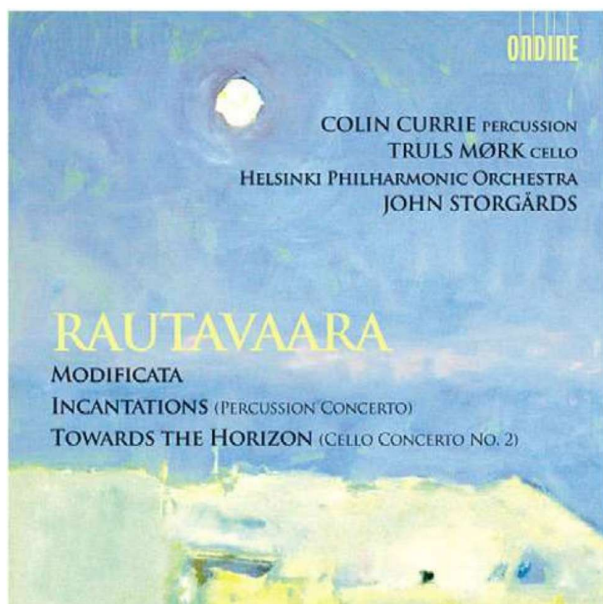


April 2012

# GRAMOPHONE *Choice*



Informed by our unrivalled panel of critics,  
we choose the month's must-hear recordings



## Recording of the Month

*'Storgårds and the Helsinki Philharmonic give exemplary support in the big-boned textures of both concertos but also shine on their own'*

► FOR THE REVIEW BY GUY RICKARDS, TURN TO PAGE 42

### RAUTAVAARA

Cello Concerto No 2, 'Towards the Horizon'.

Modificata. Percussion Concerto, 'Incantations'

Colin Currie *perc* Truls Mørk *vc*

Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra / John Storgårds

Online ODE1178-2



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including Recording of the Month, through the  
online Gramophone Player at [gramophone.co.uk](http://gramophone.co.uk)



### GUBAIDULINA

Seven Words. In croce.

Kadenza. Et exspecto

Iñaki Alberdi *bayán*

Asier Polo *vc*

Basque National Orchestra

/ José Ramón Encinar

Et cetera KTC1433

'Music of strong and even painful intensity, seizing and gripping the attention...a compelling work'

► REVIEW ON PAGE 46



### LISZT . TCHAIKOVSKY

Piano Works

Sergio Tiempo *pf*

Svizzera Italiana Orch /

Ion Marin, Alexandre

Rabinovitch-Barakovsky

Avanti Classic

AVANTI0382

'It is no exaggeration to say that he may well be the most dazzling and spontaneous pianist of his generation'

► REVIEW ON PAGE 47



### LUTOSŁAWSKI

Orchestral Works, Vol 2

Louis Lortie *pf*

BBC SO / Edward Gardner

Chandos CHSA5098

'Plaudits, too, for Gardner's conception of the riveting Fourth Symphony, which has both infectious involvement and considerable expressive ardour to commend it'

► REVIEW ON PAGE 49



### RUDERS

Music of Poul Ruders, Vol 7

Soloists; Athelas

Sinfonietta Copenhagen;

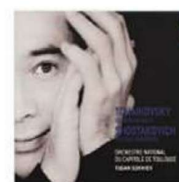
Odense Symphony

Orchestra / Minczuk

Bridge BRIDGE9375

'At any rate, I do not expect to come across another disc of contemporary music as richly rewarding as this one in a hurry.'

► REVIEW ON PAGE 50



### TCHAIKOVSKY

Symphony No 5

Toulouse Capitole

Orchestra / Sokhiev

Naïve V5252

'This is a recording which sounds composed in the playing of it, which feels organic, and which probably owes a lot to the tutorage of the great Ilya Musin who nurtured Sokhiev.'

► REVIEW ON PAGE 51





# DEBUSSY, FRANCK, POULENC

Music for Cello and Piano

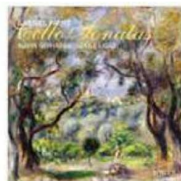
Anne Gastinel *vc*

Claire Désert *pf*

Naive V5259

'Gastinel is ideally matched by Désert; the recorded balance is judicious and there is a real sense of a performance being created in accord.'

► [REVIEW ON PAGE 54](#)



# FAURÉ

Cello Sonatas

Alban Gerhardt *vc*

Cecile Licad *pf*

Hyperion CDA67872

'Gerhardt and Licad

sound as free as air, intellectually confident, full of verve...a convincing frame of colour, movement and sound in place for every movement, every piece.'

► [REVIEW ON PAGE 54](#)



# BACH

Alto Cantatas

Daniel Taylor *countertenor*

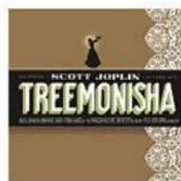
Tafelmusik Baroque

Orchestra / Jeanne Lamon

Analekta AN2 9878

'John Abberger's oboe d'amore and Jeanne Lamon's violin double each other exquisitely...and Taylor's gentle singing has perfect atmosphere.'

► [REVIEW ON PAGE 68](#)



# JOPLIN

Treemonisha

Soloists; Paragon Ragtime

Singers and Orchestra /

Rick Benjamin

New World NW80720

'The subliminal impact of all Benjamin's attention to various tiny details makes this *Treemonisha* feel instinctively right.'

► [REVIEW ON PAGE 76](#)



# DVD

VAN DER AA

Up-Close

Sol Gabetta *vc*

Amsterdam Sinfonietta /

Candida Thompson

Disquiet Media DQM04

'Gabetta moves with enviable dexterity between platform and film-screen without impairing her musicianship.'

► [REVIEW ON PAGE 53](#)



# Reissue

THE COMPLETE RECORDINGS

Moriz Rosenthal *pf*

APR APR7503

'It is Rosenthal's old-world charm, beguiling sound and almost conversational phrasing that make him unique and unforgettable.

This is, quite simply, pianophile heaven.'

► [REVIEW ON PAGE 66](#)

# GRAMOPHONE *Reviews*



*Number of works by living composers reviewed – 52*

*First recordings of new operatic works – 5*

## ORCHESTRAL

44

Nielsen's first and last symphonies from the LSO; Vänskä's American Sibelius cycle begins; Thielemann's Beethoven on CD and DVD

## CHAMBER

54

Two cellists play Fauré; Kronos Quartet explore the music of Vladimir Martynov; Juilliard Quartet gems reissued

## INSTRUMENTAL

62

Granados from Spain and America; a fine Chopin player discovered; Jill Crossland plays Rameau; French Beethoven sonata cycle begins

## VOCAL

68

Michael Gielen conducts Mahler; Mendelssohn from Equilbey's singers; Telemann's *St Matthew Passion* rediscovered

## OPERA

76

New benchmark for Joplin's opera *Treemonisha*; *La traviata* from Vienna and Graz; round-up of new contemporary opera recordings

## BOOKS

82

Tomi Mäkelä's Sibelius study now in English; Peter Dickinson on a new biography of versatile American composer William Schuman

## REPLAY

84

The magic of Günter Wand; Bruckner and Wagner from Knappertsbusch; symphonic treasures from Rome's Santa Cecilia

## THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE TO...

86

A jaunt through the more rarified corners of Renaissance French chanson, courtesy of our early music critic Fabrice Fitch

## THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

88

Richard Osborne on the dark churnings and seamless contours of Brahms's Third Symphony; which will be his top choice?



# GRAMOPHONE *Features*

## *April 2012*

### PRELUDES 10

### NEWS ANALYSIS 12

How music is getting a boost from major sporting events

### MUSICIAN'S DIARY 15

Conductor Simone Young keeps a journal from Hamburg

### SESSION REPORT 16

Dmitri Hvorostovsky records Rachmaninov in Moscow

### ICONS 18

David Munrow, the fondly remembered early music pioneer

### THE MUSICIAN AND THE SCORE 21

Colin Currie on Rautavaara's new percussion concerto

### NEW MUSIC 23

We explore three of the most engaging and fruitful areas of contemporary composition through interviews with three of its leading figures: Michael White meets inspirational choral composer Eric Whitacre, Philip Kennicott talks to the leading American composer John Adams and Philip Clark meets with Harrison Birtwistle, as free-thinking as ever after nearly 50 years. Plus, Peter Quantrill questions where new music might take us next

### MUSICAL JOURNEYS 95

Jake Heggie's *Moby-Dick* in Calgary, starring Ben Heppner; Sally Beamish's new work, *Spinal Chords*, for the Olympics

### HIGH FIDELITY 99

When the going gets tough, it's time to turn back to serious audio: Andrew Everard on the return to traditional, specialist, hi-fi systems

### LETTERS 109

### NEW RELEASES 116

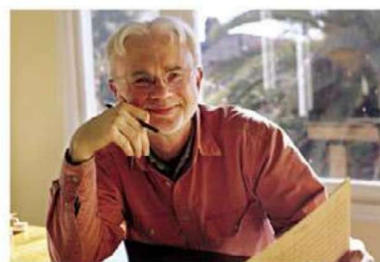
### REVIEWS INDEX 120

### MY MUSIC 122

London lawyer and recital series founder, Ian Rosenblatt



21 Colin Currie on interpreting Rautavaara



23 Talking new music with (from top to bottom) composers Eric Whitacre, Harrison Birtwistle and John Adams



95 Ben Heppner stars in *Moby-Dick* at Calgary Opera





*"A role which is indubitably a perfect fit for him..."* says the Independent newspaper. Rolando's "vocal elegance and old-fashioned manner are both deeply touching and entirely in character with Werther, the poetic dreamer. 'Sun, flood me with your radiance,' he sings, the voice opening to its embrace, the sound melting away to rapturous effect. Starring Rolando in the title role and Sophie Koch as his unattainable love, Charlotte; this performance led by Antonio Pappano is Rolando's first complete opera recording since 2008. Hardly a shotgun opera, but definitely worth the wait.

**Rolando Villazón/Sophie Koch** **Massenet: Werther**

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## MASTERCLASSES FROM EMMANUEL PAHUD

A year after the launch of Play with a Pro, the world's first video-on-demand HD movie library for wind instrument masterclasses, deputy editor Sarah Kirkup interviews world-renowned flautist Emmanuel Pahud about his ongoing involvement in the project – with some free footage for you to watch, too!



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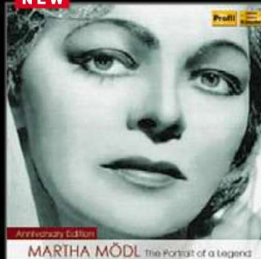
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- Vol. 5:** JOSEPH HAYDN Symphony in E flat major Hob. I: 76  
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# PRELUDES

On music, on musicians, on record

News Analysis 12 • Quiz 14 • Musician's Diary 15

Session Report 16 • Icons 18 • Musician and the Score 21







## Music in the key of purple

**Where**  
QEH, Southbank  
Centre, London

**The details**  
*Conloninpurple* sound  
sculpture created by  
Trimpin in honour of  
Conlon Nancarrow

Southbank Centre celebrates the genius of eccentric composer Conlon Nancarrow over the weekend of April 21 and 22, with performances of his *Studies for Player Piano* on an original Ampico reproducing piano and in new arrangements for the London Sinfonietta. The Queen Elizabeth Hall foyer will also be transformed by *Conloninpurple*, a room-sized sound sculpture by MacArthur-winning artist Trimpin. The hanging chains of fuchsia trumpets and tuned wooden and metal bars form a five-octave instrument, which operates via a magnetic field. The sculpture was created in 1997, in honour of Nancarrow, and makes its first appearance in the UK at the festival.



# 'Sports and the arts are no longer engaged in an age-old funding war'

That old cliché of sports and the arts locked in an endless battle for public funding has been rigorously challenged in recent months. The UK government's Cultural Olympiad, which supports arts projects inspired by the 2012 Olympic Games, is steadily gathering pace and is responsible for a number of programmes which promise a lasting impact for classical music, among them NMC's New Music 20x12 composer commissions.

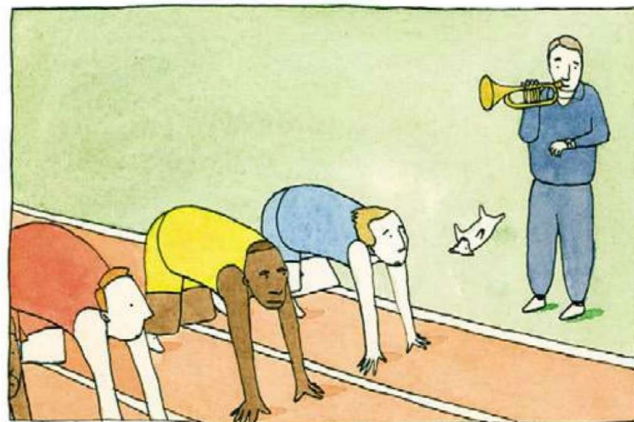
But it's not just the Olympics that are having a positive effect on UK arts. The 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow are already making waves. In February the Royal Scottish National Orchestra announced details of its plans to move to Glasgow Royal Concert Hall, thanks largely to grants of £7m and £5m from the Scottish Government and Glasgow City Council respectively. Subject to planning permission, the £14m development will supply a 'world-class performance space for the city of Glasgow' and is part of major regeneration work in preparation for the Games.

*'RSNO's new venue is proof that, with a little creative thinking, sports and the arts can be mutually beneficial'*

The multi-purpose unit will double as rehearsal space and 600-seater auditorium, with recording and broadcasting facilities, a learning centre and office space. Construction is expected to begin in the autumn and to be completed in summer 2014.

The project 'will create a lasting legacy for the people of Scotland', said Fiona Hyslop, Scottish culture secretary, and will enhance the musical experiences of audiences and performers alike long after Glasgow's Commonwealth hosting duties have passed. A heartening thought – and proof that sports and the arts can be mutually beneficial with a little creative thinking.

The legacy of Sir Charles Mackerras has been cemented at English National Opera with the announcement of a new award in his name. The conductor enjoyed a long and fruitful relationship with the company, serving as music director between 1970 and 1977.



The Charles Mackerras Fellowship, in association with the Philip Loubser Foundation, will be presented to 'an exceptional emerging conducting talent' and offer a two-year development programme mentored by ENO music director Edward Gardner.

The first recipient will be announced in April and embark on his or her course from the beginning of the 2012-13 season. A shortlist of potential candidates is currently being drawn up by ENO in consultation with music directors from leading musical institutions.

ENO has long been a high-profile supporter of fresh talent and this new award continues that tradition. By nurturing the winner over a structured period rather than simply offering a monetary prize, the company can ensure not only an intensive course of study for the winner, but its continued connection with a conductor trained to world-class standards when the programme comes to an end.

English National Opera will be hoping that its Mackerras Fellowship can mirror the success of another operatic mentoring scheme across the pond – Metropolitan Opera's Beverly Sills Artist Award, which this year goes to soprano Angela Meade (visit the News section of [gramophone.co.uk](http://gramophone.co.uk) to see her in action). Worth \$50,000, the grant is open to rising singers who have featured in solo roles at the Met and provides funding and support. Meade is only the seventh winner of the prize, which has already proven its worth by helping to launch the international careers of Joyce DiDonato and Nathan Gunn. **G**

## Specialist Classical Chart The UK's best-selling pure classical releases

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>1</b> (1) <b>Anthony Hopkins - 'Composer'</b><br>CBSO / Michael Seal <i>Classic FM</i>               | <b>6</b> (New) <b>Bach - Concertos</b><br>Xuefei Yang <i>EMI</i>                                  |
| <b>2</b> (2) <b>Paul Mealor - 'A Tender Light'</b><br>Tenebrae; RPO / Nigel Short <i>Sony Classical</i> | <b>7</b> (5) <b>'Seraph' - Trumpet Concertos</b><br>Alison Balsom <i>EMI</i>                      |
| <b>3</b> (New) <b>Berg, Beethoven - Violin Concs</b><br>Isabelle Faust; Orch Mozart / Abbado <i>HM</i>  | <b>8</b> (New) <b>Nielsen - Symphonies Nos 1 &amp; 6</b><br>LSO / Sir Colin Davis <i>LSO Live</i> |
| <b>4</b> (4) <b>Miloš - 'The Guitar'</b><br>Miloš Karadaglić <i>DG</i>                                  | <b>9</b> (8) <b>Bach - Cantatas</b><br>Andreas Scholl <i>Decca</i>                                |
| <b>5</b> (New) <b>'Tune thy Musick to thy Hart'</b><br>Stile Antico; Fretwork <i>HM</i>                 | <b>10</b> (7) <b>'Los Pajaros Perdidos'</b><br>L'Arpeggiata / Pluhar <i>Virgin Classics</i>       |



Isabelle Faust's Berg and Beethoven enters the chart at number three

Chart for week ending February 11 (previous week's position in brackets). Visit [gramophone.co.uk](http://gramophone.co.uk) for weekly updates of the chart, along with reviews

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# Disc of the Month

## Mozart

### 'Coronation' Mass · Exsultate, jubilate

The Choir of St John's College, Cambridge performs Mozart's 'Coronation' Mass with the St John's Sinfonia playing on period instruments, and soloists including Susan Gritton. Also included on this disc is Gritton's first recorded performance of the dramatic solo cantata *Exsultate, jubilate*, and a motet for the Feast of Corpus Christi, *Ave verum corpus*.

CHAN 0786

# CHANDOS New Releases

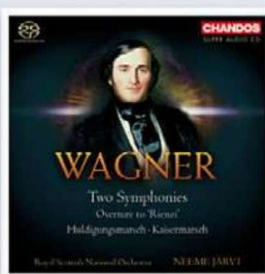


## Chopin

### Piano Works, Vol. 2

Louis Lortie here offers Volume 2 in his series of solo piano works by Chopin. The magazine *Pianist* wrote of the first volume: 'He is a pianist of our time when it comes to speed, energy and an unfussy approach to Chopin. His way of playing is like a sharply cut steel sculpture, super elegant and not with one single smudge.'

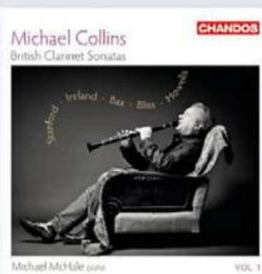
CHAN 10714



## Wagner, Vol. 5

The Royal Scottish National Orchestra and Neeme Järvi have reached Volume 5 in their series of orchestral works by Richard Wagner. American Record Guide said of a previous volume: 'This is wonderful playing and sound... Järvi knows exactly what to do to make the music speak'. This SACD presents two early symphonies, two later marches, and the overture to *Rienzi*.

CHSA 5097



## British Clarinet Sonatas, Vol. 1

This is Volume 1 in a new series devoted to British Clarinet Sonatas, featuring the exclusive Chandos artist Michael Collins in works by Bax, Bliss, Howells, Ireland, and Stanford. He is accompanied by the pianist Michael McHale.

CHAN 10704

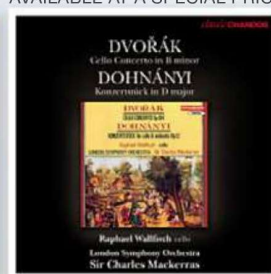


## Benjamin/Lucas Film Music

The BBC National Orchestra of Wales and Rumon Gamba perform film music by Arthur Benjamin and Leighton Lucas, including the 'Storm Clouds Cantata' from Hitchcock's *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, the 'Stage Fright Rhapsody' from *Stage Fright*, and a Suite from *Ice Cold in Alex*.

CHAN 10713

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## Dvořák/Dohnányi

Raphael Wallfisch is the soloist in this re-release of our recording of Dvořák's B minor Cello Concerto and Dohnányi's *Konzertstück* for Cello and Orchestra, with the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Charles Mackerras. The recording was a Critics' Choice in *Gramophone* when originally released.

CHAN 10715 X

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Music of Mourning  
& Consolation  
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### A Song of Farewell

Music of Mourning & Consolation

Following the success of their 2011 disc of Berlioz's *Grande Messe des Morts*, the second release by **Paul McCreesh** will be a recording of the Gabrieli's renowned *a cappella* programme of music for mourning and consolation. This beautifully poignant collection of British choral music includes works by composers as diverse as Morley and Dove, Sheppard and Walton, and features Howell's *Requiem*.

Berlioz  
*Grande Messe des Morts*  
1837  
MCCREESH

SIGCD280

EDITOR'S CHOICE  
GRAMOPHONE

★★★★★

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MAGAZINE

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## QUIZ



My high notes have been compared to Ethel Merman's powerful voice

## Who am I?

Pit your wits against Gramophone

I was born on a farm and started singing before I could walk. I even sang in my dreams. When I sang in my church choir the choirmaster suggested I take voice lessons but I hated it. My first voice teacher almost killed me.

In fact, I consider myself self-taught and the best teacher is the stage. I made my local Royal opera debut with only three days' notice, but the conductor wasn't nice to me and afterwards I wanted to kill myself. And that's not the only time I clashed with conductors. The feeling could be mutual with even the biggest names.

For nine years I was stalked by a crazy American actress, who eventually committed suicide. I myself have committed suicide many, many times...on stage.

My powerful high notes have been compared to Broadway's Ethel Merman – I think I could have danced all night. Once, when I sang a high C in an open-air performance, people outside the arena thought the fire alarm had been sounded! I used to compete with one of my tenors to see which of us could hold our high C the longest – and he was such a bad loser that he once threatened to walk out without finishing the performance.

One of my favourite roles was the Marschallin, but people didn't invite me to sing it. During 28 years in Vienna, I encountered 10 different Marschallins – Hilde Konetzni was the most moving, with her heart in the right place – but not one of them was me.

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### JANUARY ISSUE WINNER

The answer was **Cosima Wagner**.

The first correct answer drawn was submitted by Ronald Magid of Washington state, USA, who wins a selection of CDs.



## MUSICIAN'S DIARY

# Simone Young

The Australian conductor muses on her work ethic and the importance of Germany and Austria to her developing musical style

**I**t's hard to avoid the feeling that Mahler's looking over your shoulder in Hamburg: there's a yard-wide bronze plaque affixed to the front of the Staatsoper by the taxi stand – complete with an image of him. Most evenings as I wait for my ride home, I study Mahler's face and am reminded that he was uncompromising in his rehearsals of the orchestra, that he worked closely with his singers and that he was a prolific performer, averaging more than a hundred performances a year in his six years as conductor here.

In this city of strong musical traditions, Mahler's music is much performed. His Second Symphony was conceived here while he attended a memorial service in St Michael's Church: the choir inspired his final movement in which the chorus sing of resurrection and consolation. No pressure for me conducting this monumental work in Hamburg then!

**We are blessed** with a beautiful concert hall (built 1908) that has a wonderfully warm acoustic and supports a full, luxurious string sound.

*'It all sounds very nerdy, but I believe in doing the most thorough preparation possible, to better understand the work'*

But Mahler was already thinking ahead of the acoustic possibilities available, writing for huge orchestral forces, including choirs, soloists, off-stage bands, etc, and the Laieszhalle's resources are stretched to the limit by this symphony. We're all waiting expectantly for the opening of the new concert hall, the Elbphilharmonie, which is already years behind schedule and massively over-budget.

The two Mahler anniversaries meant that the 2010-11 season was filled with his works. We also completed our *Ring* cycle that season. I chose to spread the new productions of the *Ring* over four seasons, and the long-awaited final part – *Götterdämmerung*, which surely counts as the Everest of the opera repertoire – premiered in October 2010.

**Although I started** my conducting career at Opera Australia in my early twenties, the formation of my musical style really took place during my engagements in Germany and Austria in the years that followed. Listening to and working with the great traditional German orchestras, becoming fluent in the German language, adding the Wagner operas to my repertoire – these were my 'apprentice' years. I was fortunate to have opportunities to conduct all the *Ring* operas, individually and in cycles, in Berlin and Vienna, before doing 'my' *Ring* in Hamburg.

**Lovers of literature**, art, history and music will understand the thrill of studying original manuscripts and the inspiration this can provide. Both the Bayreuth Festival and Haus Wahnfried (Wagner archives) allowed me extensive access to sketches, handwritten scores, early sets of orchestral parts, and so on, which proved invaluable in



*With baritone Bo Skovhus, who's singing the title-role in *Lear**



*The imposing Mahler plaque; and Hamburg lakeside reflection*

preparing Hamburg's *Ring*. It all sounds very nerdy, but I believe in doing the most thorough preparation possible, in order to follow the compositional process and have a better comprehension of the work. This is followed by detailed preparation of the performance material and similarly detailed rehearsal of singers and orchestra alike.

**Which brings me** to the present. The Hamburg premiere of another monumental German opera – this one written rather more recently – is imminent. *Lear*, by Aribert Reimann, was premiered in Munich in 1978, and I'm conducting the first Hamburg performance. The music is very complex, rhythmically dominated by a huge percussion section, but also has exquisite lyrical passages, for *Lear* and Cordelia in particular.

**The dress rehearsal** took place yesterday, so today I'm in limbo – all the hard work is done and we're waiting to perform, hoping that our passion for the work will be shared by our audience. I sit on my sofa, have the cricket on TV, read, write emails and gaze into the distance. It's time to reflect, to recharge the batteries before the intensity of performance takes over. I think Mahler would have understood... **G**

► To read Gramophone's review of Simone Young's Mahler Symphony No 2, turn to page 49; for our review of *Götterdämmerung*, turn to page 78





## SESSION REPORT Hvorostovsky sings Rachmaninov

Work *Rachmaninov Romances*

Artists *Dmitri Hvorostovsky (baritone), Ivari Ilja (piano)*

Venue *Great Hall, Moscow State Conservatory*

Engineers *Dmitriy Kovyshenko, Aleksey Meshchanov* Producer *Vladimir Kopyov*

Mixing and Mastering *Ruslana Oreshnikova* Date *July 13-24, 2011* Words *Geoffrey Norris*

Guests are wafting through the corridors of the Moscow Conservatory – or, at any rate, there are distant spectral rattlings. It's a warm July evening. The students are on vacation but the craftsmen refurbishing the building in time for the start of the autumn term and the new concert season are definitely not. The Conservatory's Great Hall, redolent not only of its rich musical legacy but also of freshly applied paint, seems to be empty, save for Dmitri Hvorostovsky and his pianist Ivari Ilja, who are on stage ready to record a sequence of Rachmaninov songs. All is quiet – until the banging starts.

Hvorostovsky has booked the hall for close on a fortnight, because he wants to set down not only the Rachmaninov songs for his new Ondine CD but also some others by Rachmaninov and by different composers for future projects. He's going to need this long stretch of Moscow evenings if harmony is to be preserved between the needs of music and the deadlines of builders. But all problems are there to be overcome and the snags of occasional noise are vastly outweighed by the Great Hall's acoustical advantages and historical atmosphere.

The statue of Tchaikovsky outside in the courtyard is a potent reminder of one great composer who passed through the Conservatory's portals but there were many, many more, including Rachmaninov himself, who graduated from Moscow in piano in 1891 and in composition a year later. The Conservatory's smaller

*'The benevolent spirits flying around in this Great Hall make an emotional impact'*

*– Dmitri Hvorostovsky*

concert hall is named after him but the sound quality of the Great Hall is the one to choose for a disc.

Ruslana Oreshnikova, who is responsible for the mixing and mastering of Hvorostovsky's new CD, has long experience of working on recordings in the Conservatory and describes the acoustics as 'unique and on a level of the best concert halls in the world'. It's certainly worth waiting for that last nail to be hammered in and for the paint buckets to be put away for the night in order to benefit from the hall's sonic warmth and immediacy.

Hvorostovsky, like everyone else who comes into this wonderful, evocative auditorium, senses the weight of its history. He speaks of the benevolent spirits flying around, spirits who help him and make an 'emotional impact'. He also has in mind the example of the great Armenian-born baritone Pavel Lisitsian (1911-2004), 'probably one





1 Dmitri Hvorostovsky and the team enjoy a casual moment waiting for the renovators at the Moscow Conservatory to finish work



2 Hvorostovsky alone in the magnificent Great Hall  
3 Two's company: Hvorostovsky with pianist Ivri Ilja

of the most beautiful voices of the 20th century'. Hvorostovsky explains: 'As a little boy I listened to him. Traditionally, baritones like to sing Rachmaninov songs, and Lisitsian sang many of the well-known songs, responding to the beauty of Rachmaninov and the "eastern" style that imbues some of his melodies.'

Another of Hvorostovsky's role models is Irina Arkhipova, the illustrious Russian mezzo-soprano who died two years ago. It was she who 'ordered' Hvorostovsky to enter the 1989 Cardiff Singer of the World competition, which he won, beating Bryn Terfel into second place. 'Arkhipova was my guide for years and years of my career,' says Hvorostovsky. 'She was a fantastic recitalist. I always admired her.'

With Lisitsian, Arkhipova, Chaliapin and other Moscow luminaries of the past in his head, Hvorostovsky returns to the platform. Ruslana Oreshnikova explains that the microphones and levels have to be set up separately for each song, to suit the individual wishes of the performers and also to accommodate diverse questions of balance. As she points out, the rapturous 'Spring Waters', Op 14 No 11, with its prominent piano part, requires a different approach from that of the more subdued 'She is as beautiful as noon', Op 14 No 9.

There is much tweaking to be done with the Studer Vista 9 console and with the Sennheiser, Neumann, Brauner and DPA microphones. This is a complex process but it is one to which Hvorostovsky will return this year in further Moscow sessions. He speaks of looking back on his career, so that some of the Rachmaninov songs are ones he has recorded before, now reflecting 'changes of interpretation, conception and voice'. But, while also revisiting Glinka and Mussorgsky, he is at the same time looking forwards, having recently taken up some lesser-known songs by Taneyev. A busy summer ahead – with or without the builders. ⑥

► To read Gramophone's review, turn to page 72


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# David Munrow

Ed Breen recalls the inquisitive and untiring enthusiast who broke the bounds of early music to become a pivotal force

Had he not died in 1976, David Munrow – one of the great pioneering early music specialists and a prolific broadcaster – would have turned 70 this year. And it is a testament to his life and work that he is still remembered widely today.

When LPs were dominant, Munrow was to be found in most record collections. Keen listeners might have had ‘Greensleeves to a Ground’ (1976), specialists ‘The Art of the Netherlands’ (1975) and lighter listeners the music from the hit BBC series *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (1970). Indeed, it was through his work with the BBC that Munrow became a household name. His radio series *Pied Piper* began in 1971. Aimed at younger listeners, it was enjoyed by all ages and helped establish him as something of a ‘national treasure’.

David Munrow was a talented bassoonist who also played the recorder after being introduced to it by a German student lodging in his parents’ home. In 1960, before university, he taught in Peru as part of the British Council’s voluntary overseas teaching programme and immersed himself in traditional music by collecting and playing folk instruments. At Cambridge, where he read English, he was encouraged further by Thurston Dart, who famously loaned him a crumhorn. Munrow’s collection of instruments grew steadily throughout the 1960s. A postgraduate year in Birmingham, spent researching 17th-century songs, fuelled his enthusiasm further and by the mid-1960s he was playing for the Royal Shakespeare Company. He also toured with Gillian Reid (whom he married in 1966), giving lectures and recitals across the country.

The year 1967 was a key one in Munrow’s career: he founded the Early Music Consort of London with James Bowman (countertenor), Oliver Brookes (violin), Christopher Hogwood (keyboards and percussion) and James Tyler (lute). Their repertoire was to span from Léonin to Handel, as well as modern commissions (Maxwell Davies, Elisabeth Lutyens, Peter Dickinson), with Munrow playing a vast number of instruments. One of the consort’s great achievements was to bring professionalism and flair to early music: gone were the long pauses for tuning, jargon-laden introductions and applause after each short piece. Munrow planned his concerts to include both a pleasing contrast of music and a trajectory for the evening as a whole. As Howard Mayer Brown put it in *Early Music*: ‘The special quality that set David Munrow apart, or so it seems to me, was...an uncanny ability, given only to a few great teachers, to convince large numbers of people that what was important and attractive to him should also be attractive and important to them.’

Munrow’s work with his consort fell into three broad categories. The first was deeply indebted to the work of continental ensembles and his fellow Londoners, Musica Reservata. Munrow built on their ideas with panache and showmanship. Towards the end of this period stands ‘Music for Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain’ (1973), which combines 15th-century music from the *Cancionero Musical de Palacio* with 16th-century pieces showcasing his skills for early music ‘orchestration’ and technical virtuosity. Although these albums might raise the occasional eyebrow in these times of Historically Informed Performance practice, they undoubtedly demonstrate an impressive coherence of vision and musical commitment. The second phase

contains the work of a more reflective musician. His magnum opus, ‘Instruments of the Middle Ages and Renaissance’ (1974), summarises his vast knowledge of instruments and indicates a more historically informed approach to instrumentation. ‘Music of the Gothic Era’ (1975) marks the pinnacle of Munrow’s approach to medieval music: it’s easy to forget that a box-set of LPs devoted entirely to medieval music was itself a huge achievement in the mid-1970s.

The final phase of Munrow’s career was only just beginning when he died. If it was felt that he had been avoiding the intellectual preoccupation of sacred choral music running through the Renaissance, then ‘The Art of the Netherlands’ (1975) unveiled a visionary selection. It is a great loss that we will never have his complete recording of Brumel’s Mass *Et ecce terrae motus*, since the movement included in this set shows a fine ear for ensemble singing and a clear preference for the straighter, brighter choral sound which now dominates.

While it would be unrealistic to claim that Munrow is more special than any of today’s icons of early music, he was such an important pioneer that his place in music history is surely secure. Some of his ideas are now outmoded but they were never anything less than totally committed and excellently realised, yielding fascinating, enjoyable and frequently very moving results. What better reasons are there for performing early music today? **G**

## THE ESSENTIAL RECORDING



‘Instruments of the Middle Ages and Renaissance’  
Early Music Consort of London / David Munrow  
Virgin Veritas © 2 385811-2 (6/76°)

## DEFINING MOMENTS

### • AUTUMN 1961 – Cambridge University

Munrow read English at Pembroke College (1961–64), where he met figures who were to play a key role in his professional development, among them Thurston Dart who encouraged his study, Christopher Hogwood with whom he collaborated on many projects, and Jasper Parrott who was to become his agent.

### • 1967 – The Early Music Consort of London

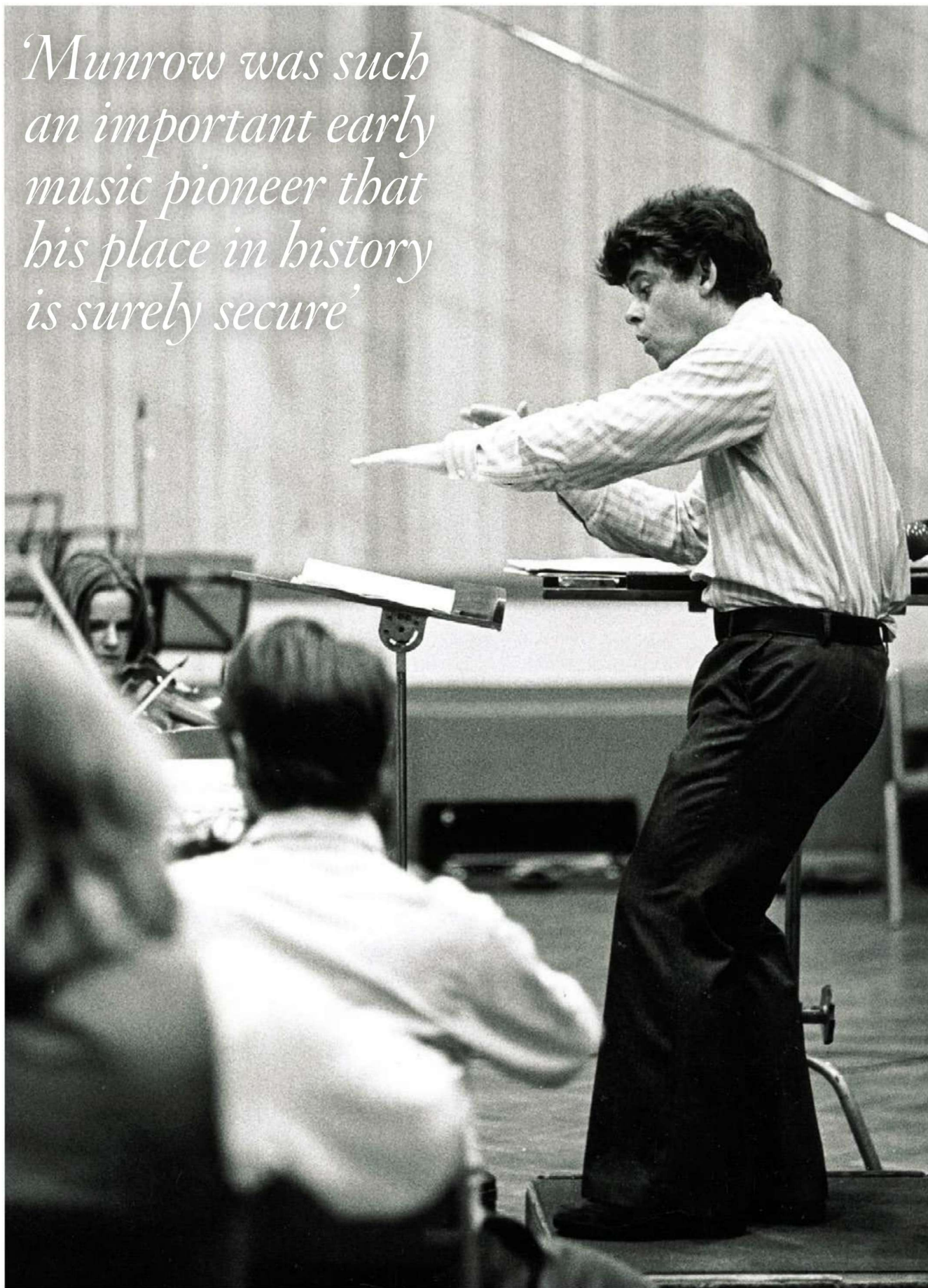
James Bowman remembers being asked on the spot if he would join the Consort. Interviewed in *Gramophone*, Munrow recalled that meeting: ‘I heard James Bowman and thought that here was the most fabulous “noise” I’d ever heard.’

### • 1971 – Pied Piper radio series

Munrow’s *Pied Piper* followed hot on the heels of Christopher Hogwood’s programme *The Young Idea*. Munrow dazzled listeners with his enormous breadth of musical knowledge and, in turn, the programme helped establish him in the wider consciousness.



*'Munrow was such  
an important early  
music pioneer that  
his place in history  
is surely secure'*



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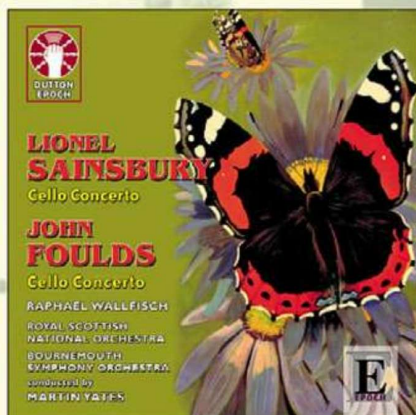




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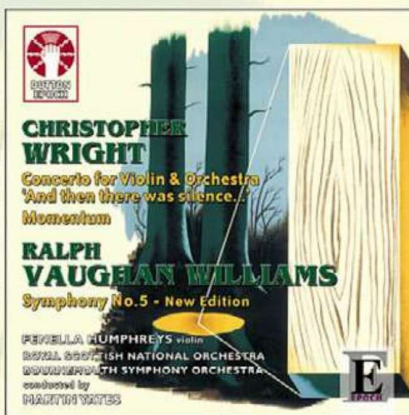
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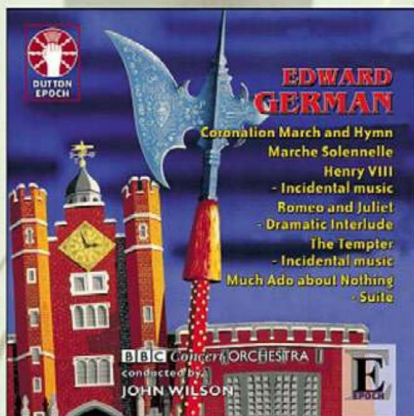
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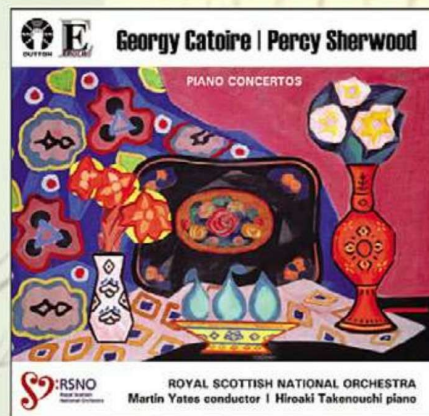


## 2012 – The 150th Anniversary of Edward German's birth

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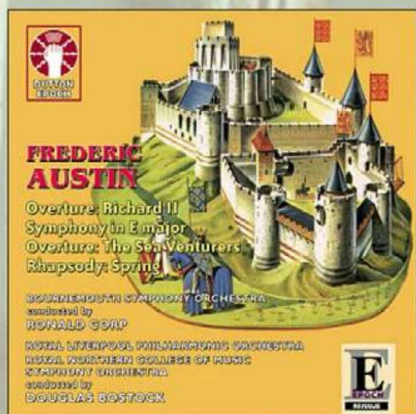


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Pianist Hiroaki Takenouchi (featured in the critically acclaimed television documentary *The Prince and the Composer*) has recorded his first programme for Dutton Epoch. He explores piano concertos by Georgy Catoire (1861-1926) and Percy Sherwood (1866-1939), two worthwhile but neglected contemporaries who came to musical maturity in the closing years of the nineteenth century. The Russian Catoire – who came into the circle of Tchaikovsky, Arensky and Lyadov – wrote in that glorious musical time in Russia before the dissolution of the Revolution, and it is remarkable that his heart-warming, lyrical Concerto of 1909 has been unrecorded until now. To all intents and purposes, the German-born Percy Sherwood was a late romantic composer, who made a significant career as both pianist and composer in Germany until 1914, but he died in London in June 1939. His output derives from the late-nineteenth century romantic tradition, a character particularly apparent in the gorgeous slow movement of his Second Piano Concerto (1932-33). These two delightful additions to the piano concerto repertoire are issued in Dutton Epoch's International Series.



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## THE MUSICIAN AND THE SCORE

# Rautavaara's Incantations

Philip Clark speaks to *Colin Currie* about Rautavaara's percussion concerto

**W**hen it was suggested to Einojuhani Rautavaara that he might write a percussion concerto, his publisher said it was best not to second-guess how he might react,' recalls percussionist Colin Currie. 'He recommended I go and meet him in Helsinki to talk about the idea; but when I turned up at his apartment, Rautavaara presented me with two completed movements, which he played at the piano. I reckon he was tickled to be asked – a percussion concerto is about the last thing you'd expect him to write.'

Currie premiered *Incantations*, as the work is called, at the Royal Festival Hall in October 2009; it soon became his signature piece. Recording it with the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra under John Storgårds was, he says, an opportunity to nail those nuanced problems of balance revealed by live performance. 'There's never really been a percussion concerto like this,' says Currie. 'Rautavaara's writing requires extreme rhythmic precision, but with that subtle, natural flow typical of his mystical romanticism. The orchestra, too, need to be sensitive to this unusual collision, by being slightly wary in their romanticism.'

I now reveal my problem with tonal-based percussion concertos. Percussion in Romantic music is largely deployed colouristically –

*'I reckon he was tickled to be asked – a percussion concerto is about the last thing you'd expect him to write'*

composers stumble towards unworkable terrain when they pretend that colour has a structural function without underlying harmony. Currie nods: 'This is a genuine Rautavaara piece that just happens to be for percussion. Look at this first marimba entry in the first movement: it's the start of a single line that goes on for ages and ages; but what you actually hear is a longer horizontal picture emerging.'

'In the second movement, Rautavaara uses only the vibraphone, playing the same chords refracted many times through different keys. The sound he wants is gentle and sustained, which is easy on the piano; but sustain on mallet percussion instruments is index-linked to volume. The louder you play, the more sustained it is, but the sound also gets harsher – which is not what Rautavaara wants. So I needed to create a loud dynamic with soft sticks, which meant I had to stand further away from the instruments to push the sound out.'



Colin Currie: the Rautavaara concerto, which he premiered, is his signature piece

I wonder if Currie thinks that this is a concerto 'for percussionist', in the sense that Rautavaara treats a 'battery' of instruments as a single voice? 'He manages to have it both ways. The set-up is centred around the marimba, with the other instruments layered in like an organ manual: the next layer is crotales, then a row of drums, then cymbals, to the side are tubular bells; five layers of sound. There's a point when suddenly I have to move from marimba to drums, and I want to make that a single phrase. But there are moments where Rautavaara definitely wants to play the different sounds off each other.'

A game-changing vibraphone chord that, in Rautavaara's original voicing, was not as bright as it could have been was the subject of a nervously sent email to the composer, who responded enthusiastically to the suggested change. Currie also composed the cadenza: 'If I show you what I had to go on, you'll understand the challenge!' He points to a bar near the end of the piece: held bass note with a pause. It's a brave composer who, with the curtain about to fall, trusts his soloist to carry the dramatic weight. 'My cadenza, a mini-version of the entire concerto, was my chance to add idiomatic touches, like when I play crotales and pedal cowbell at the same time. I refracted Rautavaara's material through my own tastes. The cadenza is the most dissonant part of the piece, a metaphor for the whole concerto.'

'The first time you hear Rautavaara's opening theme, which is harmonised in clusters that move in step, you assume it's quite simple; but then it becomes really special. And that's what this concerto is – somewhere between being utterly familiar and unfamiliar, normal and abnormal.' **G**

► To read Gramophone's review, turn to page 42



## The historical view

*Einojuhani Rautavaara*  
newspaper interview (April 2000)

'If an artist is not a modernist when he is young, he has no heart. And if he is a modernist when he is old, he has no brain.'

*Einojuhani Rautavaara*  
Gramophone interview (December 2008)

'A piece begins with an atmosphere in my mind, sometimes suggested by a phrase or a memory, and I keep playing with that idea until it develops into something musical. I then follow the tendencies of the music as it is being born. Musical material has a will of its own.'

*Incantations – world premiere*  
review in *The Telegraph* (October 2009)

'The weirdly dissonant shadows in the woodwind, the misty string backdrop and the strange percussion *glissandi* made it rivetingly strange. [In the] solo cadenza, Currie showed a real flair for translating Rautavaara's cold expressive climate into the tropical sound world of percussion.'



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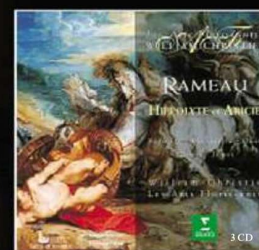


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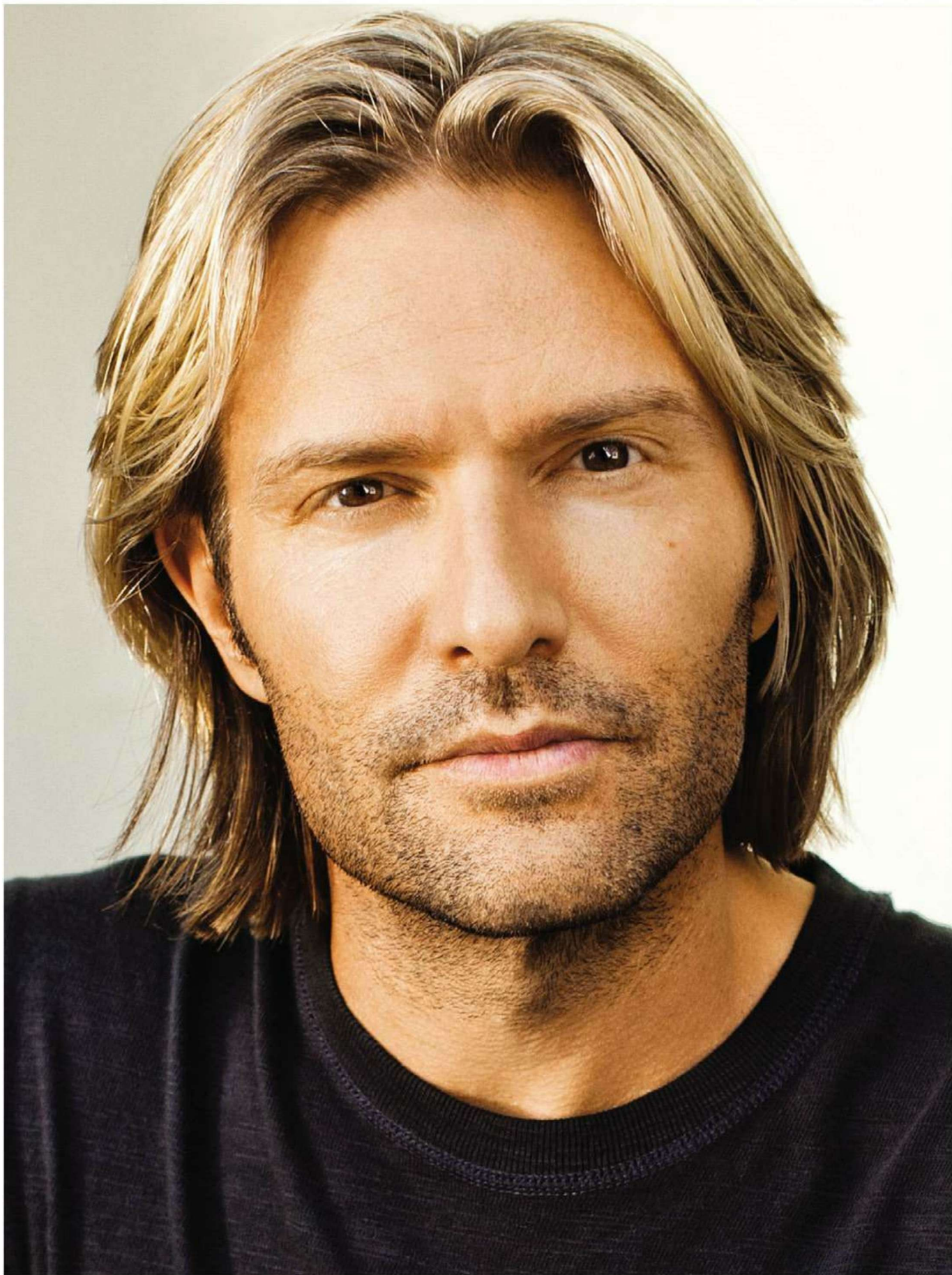
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JOHN ADAMS

*AND*

HARRISON  
BIRTWISTLE







PHOTOGRAPHY: SUZANNE KREITER/THE BOSTON GLOBE VIA GETTY IMAGES, CHRIS O'DONOVAN, DECCA MARC ROYCE





Recording his new album, 'Water Night', in St Alban's Church, London

# CHORAL KING OF COOL

Eric Whitacre's searingly honest works and his inspired use of YouTube have attracted thousands of new listeners to choral music. Michael White meets him

It's the fate of modern Britain to be overwhelmed by cultural forces crossing the Atlantic from America and a recent musical example has been our happy surrender to the supreme force that is Eric Whitacre. With just a handful of short pieces, persistently re-recorded and accessed by millions via the internet, Whitacre has found stardom at the level of rock musicians, taking care to cultivate the look. It helps that he's a paradigm example of a 21st-century composer exploiting 21st-century social media; one of his many projects has been to connect, online, thousands of people from all over the world to perform his work. But, bizarrely, he's done all this with choral music. And, what's more, choral music that manages to combine popular appeal with serious quality – owing much to English tradition, aimed at English performance standards but bringing its own new-world contribution to the table.

If nothing else, Whitacre's timing has been good. For years, the great choral tradition of this country was admired but marginal: maintained on the one hand by cathedrals and collegiate foundations at risk of decline and on the other by a diminishing network of choral societies that was looking/sounding tired. The age of oratorios was all but gone and few composers of distinction were coming forward with alternatives.

But then a new species of small professional choirs emerged out of the *opus Dei* of Oxbridge evensongs, providing leadership and inspiration. 'Holy minimal' composers such as John Tavener leapt into spotlight profile, with younger figures from James MacMillan to Tarik O'Regan in their wake. Community singing edged back into fashion, with assistance from the telegenic likes of Gareth Malone. And, as if to confirm that choral music was now sexy, in came Whitacre: a golden-maned American whose origins could scarcely have been more remote from any of this, but who brought with him a sound – distinctive, captivating, visceral – that suited English choral singing well. Despite its otherness.

Whitacre was born in 1970 in a small town close to the gambling haven of Reno, in the Nevada desert. It wasn't without musical life – there's a middle-ranking symphony orchestra in Reno, bankrolled by the oil heir-turned-composer Gordon Getty – but the young Eric Whitacre ▶



# I LEFT JUILLIARD WITH MY OWN VOICE STILL INTACT BUT CAPABLE OF GRANDER STRUCTURAL GESTURES'



Recording Julian Lloyd Webber's 60th birthday piece at Henry Wood Hall, London



Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge: to Whitacre, 'a magical land that appears at will'

had no part in it beyond ideas about joining a rock band. Somehow he managed to major in music education at Nevada State University without being able to read or notate music. But, as he tells me when we meet, 'I had no idea what I wanted to do, no sense of direction, and I spent a long time finding one.' He was a freshman for seven years, drifting through courses in whatever took his interest ('it was a State school so it was cheap'). And it was only in his fourth or fifth year that he 'stumbled' into composing.

The story of the stumbling is well known. He joined a choir, intending to meet girls, but found to his surprise that singing was itself the turn-on. So at 21 he wrote a choral setting, *Go, Lovely Rose*, based on the classic text. 'I wrote it down as best I could and had some friends help me with the harmonic spelling: it was in six sharps, and I'd never had a formal composition lesson. I taught myself by ear.'

In 1992, aged 22 and still at Nevada, he then wrote another choral piece called *Cloudburst*. And on the strength of those two scores, together with *Ghost Train*, a fun piece for wind band that became successful on the American university circuit, he was accepted, at the age of 25, on to a Masters programme at the Juilliard School, New York.

Arriving there as an autodidact from the back of beyond, Whitacre found Juilliard tough – and was unlucky with his first composition supervisor David Diamond, whose policy with mavericks like Whitacre was to crush and rebuild. 'I wrote just one thing when I was with him,' recalls Whitacre. 'It was a Frankenstein piece that sounds like me trying to write like a 1940s New York sophisticate. I was paralysed during the process.'

The only solution was to find a different tutor with a more accepting view of raw talent. It turned out to be John Corigliano – composer of the *Red Violin* Concerto for Joshua Bell in 2005 – who gave Whitacre what he needed without trying to suppress what he already had. 'From John, I learned how to structure what I was writing,' says Whitacre. 'He taught me to take a giant piece of paper and draw the entire architecture of the piece from beginning to end, before I'd written a note of it; and the idea has served me well ever since. There's a tyranny of harmony – the second you sit down at a piano, detail takes over and you can't see forest for trees. John's method opened things up. So I left Juilliard with my own voice, the voice of *Cloudburst*, still intact but capable of grander structural gestures.'

This last point is significant. Unpacking Whitacre's life – he's now 42 – you find that the essentials of his musical language were in place from the beginning, before he ever had a serious composition lesson. He was, and remains, a natural phenomenon. And from the depths of this naturalism has come a distinctive Whitacre sound that saturates his work. Or, at least, the work on which his reputation rests.

Since 2010 he's been signed to Decca, with one CD, 'Light and Gold', released in 2011 (and winning this year's Grammy for Best Choral Performance) and another, 'Water Night', due for issue on April 2. But before that, in 2006, came the disc, performed by Stephen Layton's choir Polyphony, that first brought Whitacre to international attention: 'Cloudburst' on Hyperion. And before 'Cloudburst' came a handful of releases on small-time American labels.

Surveying the repertoire on these discs, you find it based around a nucleus of half a dozen pieces written in Whitacre's twenties/early thirties, between 1992 and 2001. They exist in varying forms as he's revisited and revised them but they none the less comprise the 'core' Whitacre we've come to know. And they establish an unmistakable sound world: a world of cluster chords that move en bloc with slow, ecstatic, ceremonial intensity through piled-up sevenths, ninths and other dissonances without resolution. Texture takes priority over melody and rhythm. And the combination of hypnotic stealth with soft, smooth-flowing, cloudy radiance suggests the sound equivalent of a 1960s lava lamp as forms emerge, swell and recede.

There's no denying the allure and beauty of all this but you might question its potential for development. Whitacre's output almost reads



like one slow-turning work in progress, with elements of self-borrowing that he calls 'consolidation'. But he insists that there is development, and always has been with every piece he writes. 'Never once in my compositional process have I thought: this is what made me successful so I'm going to do it again.'

'It makes me smile that there's this sound associated with me, based on a few scores – *Sleep*, *Water Night*, *Lux aeterna* – as though that's it, that's what I do; because as I hear it, there's more. If I look back in 20 years and find I've been writing the same piece all along I'll be very disappointed. Right now it feels like a confident, relaxed evolution.'

But accepting that there is indeed a Whitacre sound, it isn't hard to track its precedents. He cheerfully admits to 'petty thefts' from sources like Morten Lauridsen, another West Coast American who gave Whitacre practical encouragement after he left Juilliard and settled in Los Angeles. John Adams comes into the mix as well. But so does a whole range of English choral writing from Tallis to Taverner, absorbing Howells and Britten on the way.

Whitacre learned this music from recordings back in Nevada; and it's significant that he cites *Peter Grimes* as his favourite opera because there's a fragment of musical DNA in the Act 2 female-voice quartet in *Grimes* – a piled-high cluster chord with unresolved dissonance – to which most core Whitacre could probably be traced. He all but quotes it in one of his scores, *Hope, Faith, Life, Love* – though when I say so he claims never to have noticed.

An unchallengeable fixture in his music, however, is warmth: a feel-good, therapeutic factor that gets written up as New Age spirituality. He'd rather it didn't 'because the label is usually dismissive, as though what I do is surface-level. It isn't: I look deep into my texts. But I do think all music is sacred, and my pieces certainly have a spiritual dimension.'

That the music also has a sense of the transcendent has given it a place in Anglican worship, although Whitacre's texts are almost invariably secular (even when they come in Latin) and he's not a committed Christian. Agnostic is as much as he admits to. And although that places him alongside Howells, Vaughan Williams, Rutter and a good few others who supply the soundtrack to Anglican liturgy, it isn't clear how comfortably he fits into the tradition. Stephen Layton, his champion, thinks he doesn't, except as 'a temporary visitor'.

But, citing a remark of Ned Rorem, Whitacre tells me he 'believes in belief'. And he believes in the church as a purveyor of wonder, mystery and solace – especially now he's living in Britain with a residency at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, and part of the chapel community there.

The five-year appointment, which began in 2010, isn't too onerous, allowing him to be based elsewhere (in London). And he describes it with awestruck, schoolboy pleasure as 'like going into Brigadoon once a week: a magical land that appears at will, and I get to come and go'. He doesn't teach – 'I'm not an academic' – but he does lead masterclasses, involve himself with the choir, and write. To date, there's been a setting of a college grace and an Advent carol: his first-ever piece specifically written for performance in a Christian context, although its text still manages to avoid any reference to Jesus. 'Text is important to me,' he stresses. 'On past occasions when I've been asked to set words I didn't believe in, it was musically disastrous. So I'm way off doing a Mass setting. I don't say it will never happen, but for the moment I'd struggle.'

Struggling or not, he loves to go to choral evensong – 'I'd never actually been before,' he says enthusiastically. I can't help thinking that, in Oxbridge circles, you don't too often hear Stephen Cleobury and other chapel choir directors gushing about 'truth and beauty' the way Whitacre does. 'But I'm sure they feel it,' Whitacre counters. 'And as an outsider from the American West Coast, I can say it: we put other people's hearts on our sleeves. There's a romantic innocence, a naivety about me. It's my lifestyle choice.' From a critic's

point of view, the innocent enthusiasm of an Eric Whitacre can be unsettling, as can the benign goodwill and calm his music radiates. It rarely challenges or slaps you in the face (except with its own sense of being absolutely genuine). Whitacre is not by temperament a face-slapper. He believes 'the idea that you have to punch the public on the nose is what's turned classical music off the rails for the past 50 years. Ultimately, what I write is me, and perhaps I'm not that caustic a personality; but thus far, I've lived a gentle life. I've not experienced great tragedy. And since I can remember, I've been pretty popular at what I do. My music can only reflect that.'

Francis Poulenc once said of his work that it was there not to be analysed but loved. Maybe the same applies to Eric Whitacre who, from the postings on his website, isn't short of adoration. A serious operator when it comes to social networking, his latest attempt at a 'virtual choir' was early last year when nearly 2000 singers from 58 countries performed *Sleep*. This and other projects have given him celebrity beyond the reach of normal art-music composers, fuelled by Eric Whitacre merchandise and roadshows. He isn't shy of commerce. And, as everyone now knows, he's signed to a modelling agency – although the rumours about Calvin Klein are not true: 'You can imagine the debates I had about going into this,' he says, 'and so far I haven't done a campaign for anyone; it's got to be the right thing.'

I tell him it's a joy that someone in his position should be modelling, though I can't see Harrison Birtwistle diversifying in the same way. It takes a brave man to be so unconcerned about his credibility.

But in his easy, West Coast way, Whitacre does have that kind of braveness. 'Growing up as I did,' he says, 'I found my voice before it occurred to me that I needed to be credible. I've approached the world of new music as an outsider.' And that's exactly what he is: a smooth, successful but sincere outsider who discovered in himself a very specific gift.

What it finally amounts to is anyone's guess. But, as Whitacre says, 'I don't think about my legacy. Just the next piece.'

## ERIC WHITACRE ON DISC



**Cloudburst**  
Polyphony / Stephen Layton  
Hyperion © CDA67543  
(4/06)

The disc that brought Whitacre to the attention of English audiences, showcasing most of what are now his 'standards' of the 1990s: *Cloudburst*, *Sleep*, *I Thank You God*, etc.



**Light & Gold**  
Eric Whitacre Singers;  
King's Singers /  
Eric Whitacre

Decca © 274 3209 (12/10)  
Another compendium disc, revisiting established favourites like *Sleep* and *I Thank You God*, plus a more recent work, *The Stolen Child*, for the King's Singers.



**Water Night**  
(released on April 2)  
Eric Whitacre Singers;  
LSO / Eric Whitacre

Decca © 279 6323  
A mix of old and new repertoire but with more emphasis on larger orchestral and instrumental writing, with, alongside all the choral music, a piece written for Julian Lloyd Webber.

## FURTHER LISTENING



**Morten Lauridsen:**  
*Lux aeterna*  
Polyphony; Britten Sinfonia /  
Stephen Layton

Hyperion © CDA67449 (4/05)  
The much-performed *O magnum mysterium* and other works by this West Coast American that stand as obvious precedents for the distinctive Whitacre sound.



**Morten Lauridsen:**  
*Nocturnes*  
Polyphony; Britten Sinfonia /  
Stephen Layton

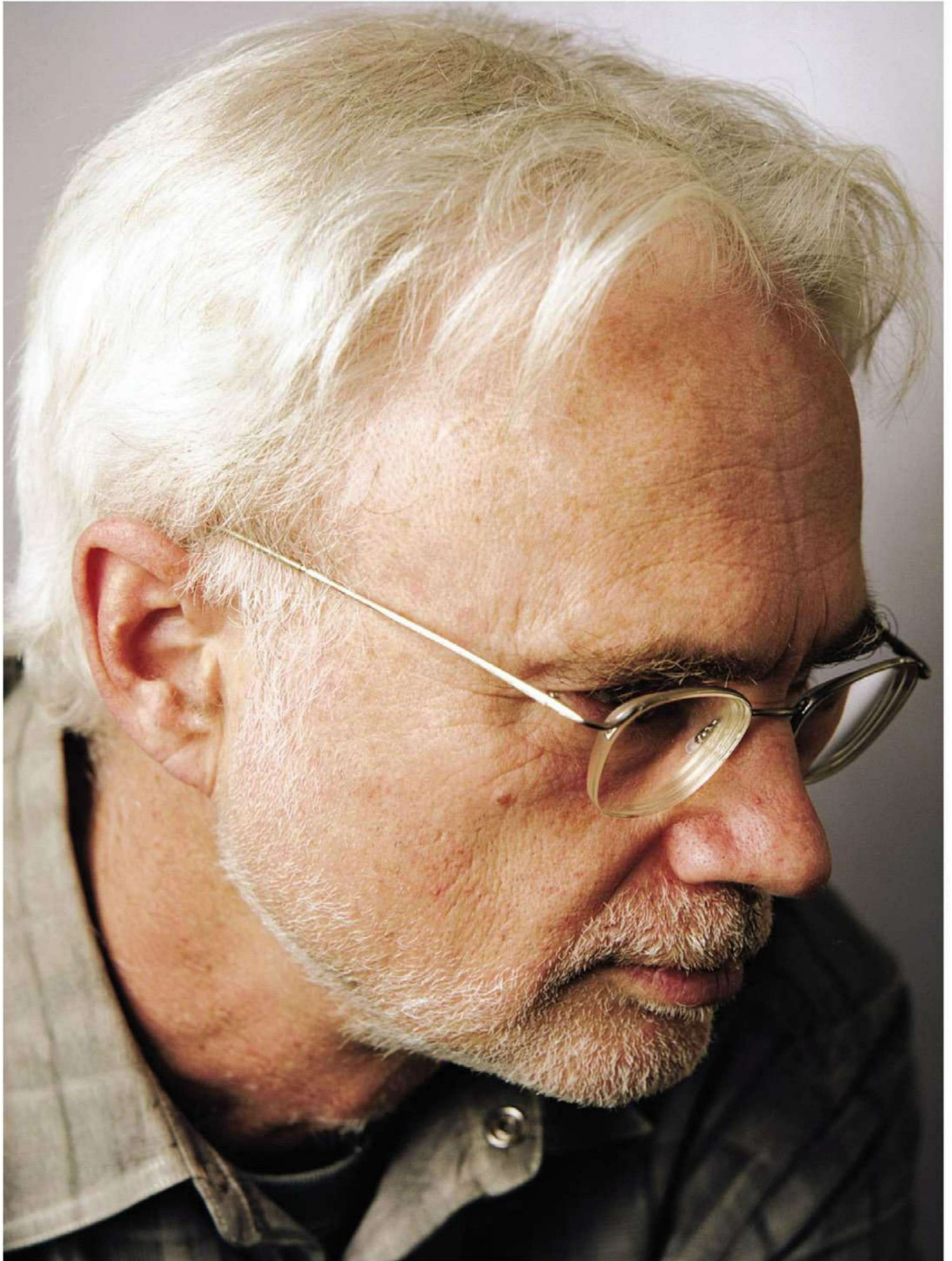
Hyperion © CDA67580 (2/07)  
A second Lauridsen round-up including a powerful 1980s suite of Robert Graves settings, *Mid-Winter Songs*.



**Paul Mealor:**  
*A Tender Light*  
Tenebrae; RPO /  
Nigel Short

Decca © 476 4814 (3/12)  
Music by a British Whitacre disciple, famous for his Royal Wedding anthem *Ubi caritas*, which features on the disc.





PHOTOGRAPHY: TERENCE MCCARTHY/SAN FRANCISCO OPERA





Doctor Atomic, dealing with 'American consciousness'

# AN AMERICAN IDOL

By combining East and West Coast ideals in his music, John Adams continues to create a sense of what it means to be alive today in America, writes Philip Kennicott

Art isn't obligatory in America. Few serious artists are household names. Composers of classical or art music may fare the worst among the creative class, creating work for ensembles that are stressed economically, desperate to hold on to conservative listeners, uncertain how much time and energy they can invest in perpetuating 'new' music. Perhaps only the poets are more lost in the wilderness.

And yet art continues all the same, every art has its niche, and every niche has its loyal cadres. If there is a contemporary cultural pantheon in America, then John Adams is in it. Like the films of Woody Allen or the novels of Philip Roth, the music of Adams is awaited with anticipation, received with excitement, parsed by the critics and committed to the general public for long-term consideration. Literate Americans may not know the work of Adams but they know they should know it.

Adams, however, isn't quite convinced of his centrality. A doubt, a kind of darkness, has crept into a composer whose musical *esprit* is so profound that it functions like an alter ego he calls the 'trickster'.

'I'm sure every composer has terrible paranoia,' he says. 'It is easy to fall into that mode of thinking.' The fear is of irrelevance: 'There are days when I feel that a composer writing for the symphony or opera house, like me at this time, is not an important cultural event.'

But it's a mark of Adams's success as a composer that everything, even the doubt and paranoia, is ultimately important material. The opera house and the symphony may be marginal venues in 21st-century America but they are the venues that keep him productive and elicit his best work. They may be removed from the preoccupations of the vast majority of Americans but he has used them to create a panoptic vision of what his society sounds like. No matter what its larger cultural status, the music of John Adams suggests a clearly audible sense of what it means to be alive today, in America, in 2012.

It all seems to flow from something elemental in Adams's personality. He is, first and foremost, comfortable in his skin. After early struggles and confusion, he found a voice that is distinctive, absorptive, flexible and open to development. The music of Adams, with its restless, forward thrust, its colourful orchestration, its dizzying juxtapositions of dark and light, serious and silly, is immediately recognisable as Adams, but there is no simple-minded Adams 'brand'. Every Adams work is a surprise, but a surprise within intelligible parameters.

Adams has also fashioned himself as a quintessentially American composer, using his biography, his significant powers as a writer, his cultivated understanding of American history and his genial personality, to weave together the disparate strands of Transcendentalism, the American sublime, the wanderings of the beat generation, the pragmatism of New England and the spiritual restlessness of California. And while Adams has created works for various ensembles and experimental instruments, he has remained committed to the basic tools, venues and institutions of classical music, which has given his music focus and continuity. He is unembarrassed to bring the wide multitudes of Walt Whitman into the old-guard habitats of the European inheritance. If America is his fundamental idea, the orchestra is his ideal medium.

Finding his voice may have been the most significant of his accomplishments. Born in Massachusetts in 1947, Adams was the son of musical parents, a jazz-sax-playing father and a mother who sang. His parents met at his maternal grandfather's New Hampshire lakeside dance hall, a regular stop for touring big bands. In *My Father Knew Charles Ives* (2003), which uses Ivesian collage techniques, the sounds of a jazz band are heard softly and *lontano*, as if filtered through the night air from Winnepesaukee Gardens, his grandfather's musical pavilion. The cover of the album features a picture of sharply dressed men in blazers and white pants, one of them his father, holding a clarinet loosely between his legs.

Just as Ives's personal musical memories of marching bands, hymns, church bells and other iconic sounds of New England became part of his sonic language, Adams is deeply connected to his past in Massachusetts ▶



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and New Hampshire. Like Ives, he has retained a powerful set of deeply individual musical reminiscences that make their way into his scores. The sudden eruptions of wildness in his music may have something to do with memories of playing clarinet in a community orchestra at a local state mental hospital, in which patients were prone to 'go off' during Schubert symphonies. In some cases, such as the lonely trumpet solos in the Ives homage and in his more recent *Doctor Atomic Symphony*, Adams's memories may be mediated by Ives himself, whose *Unanswered Question* made that particular sound as powerfully evocative to American ears as Rimsky-Korsakov's octatonic scale is to Russian ones.

This early idyll of a sonic democracy, in which classical, jazz and pop all commingled in a dimly remembered musical Utopia with no artificial boundaries, wasn't to last. The ideological conflict between musical styles that reigned in the United States in the 1960s and '70s would become an evolving conflict in Adams's life as a composer.

'It is a very profound collision,' says Adams. 'And I have felt it so deeply in my life, trying to be a classical composer but not some person way on the outside, looking in. I want to be a thriving, meaningful person in American culture, the way Duke Ellington was.'

An education at Harvard in the late 1960s wasn't going to help him find the right balance. Adams remembers his college years as an uneasy time, a period of ravenous musical curiosity but stultifying indoctrination into serial techniques that were not nourishing for the young composer. 'It was a period of profound cognitive dissonance,' he told an interviewer in the 1990s. An encounter with John Cage's book *Silence* offered a sense of freedom and release but not much help finding his own path forward. It did, however, provide the impetus to head west, where he took up residence in San Francisco, inaugurating one of the basic dualisms – East Coast, West Coast – that has remained elemental to his music-making ever since. When he recorded *My Father Knew Charles Ives*, he paired it with *The Dharma at Big Sur*, a 2003 concerto for electric violin as improvisatory, spacious and hypnotic as the Ives score is structured, nostalgic and historically allusive.

It was, of course, Adams's encounter with minimalism in the early 1970s that gave him the material he needed to find himself. Exposure to Steve Reich and Philip Glass opened up possibilities, and by 1977-78 Adams had produced what he said, in 2004, was probably his 'Opus One', a technically challenging three-part piano score called *Phrygian Gates*. It has the restless, iterative, repetitive surface of classic minimalism but the style is distinctly different, full of sharp contrasts of mood and mode. The title suggests some kind of Herculean architecture but also refers to electronic 'gates', a term Adams says he 'co-opted from electronic music', evoking sudden changes in waveform or current. Gates, loops, junctions, wild rides, road movies – the Adams lexicon of musical titles often suggests a map, or journey, through idealised, remembered or imaginary landscapes. He has written a String Quartet and a Violin Concerto but otherwise has eschewed conventional names, even while refreshing conventional forms.

Large-scale orchestral works followed, the 1980-81 *Harmonium*, and the 1984-85 *Harmonielebre* with its explicit reference to Arnold Schoenberg's classic treatise. 'It was part whimsical, part an acknowledgement of my puzzling father-son relationship to the master,' wrote Adams in his autobiographical *Hallelujah Junction*, published in 2008. But it was the 1987 opera *Nixon in China* that made him a household name. The title, he has said, is 'wry and mischievous, like a pop-art mangling of *Iphigenia in Tauris*'. But the project, developed with the avant-garde theatre director Peter Sellars, emerged as more than pop mangling. It was as if a musician steeped in the pop art rebellion against abstraction had suddenly decided to paint an enormous history painting, in the old manner. It was a source of mirth and confusion, derision and obsessive fascination for American audiences, at a time when Nixon himself was still alive and still haunting the collective conscious with a jowly smile of satisfaction at his miraculous rehabilitation. And yet even in *Nixon in*



Nixon in China: the 1987 work that inaugurated the genre of 'CNN Opera'

## 'LIKE DUKE ELLINGTON WAS, I WANT TO BE A THRIVING, MEANINGFUL PERSON IN AMERICAN CULTURE'

*China* the relation to the pop sensibility is complicated. 'There's always irony,' says Adams. But not all irony is created equal. Excoriating irony, total irony, irony that dissolves all else isn't for Adams. 'That's where I get off the boat,' he says. 'I have no interest in making my entire statement ironic.' For all its humour, its almost absurdist premise, *Nixon in China* is deeply human and moving.

By now, opera was fundamental to Adams's work, offering him, he says, a way to be fully immersed in a project, to research and read, and forge something that called on his total powers. *The Death of Klinghoffer* (1991) ran afoul of pro-Israel cultural forces in New York but has survived to be acknowledged as one of his finest and most subtle works. Other stage pieces and oratorio-like works followed, culminating in the 2005 *Doctor Atomic*, which Adams says is the work that most defines his ▶



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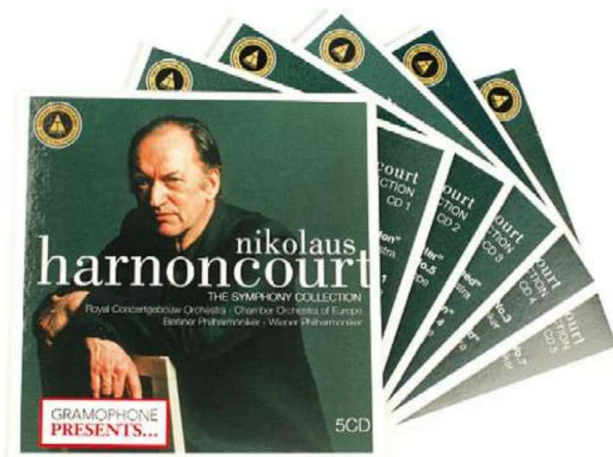
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The controversial *Death of Klinghoffer* is now regarded as one of Adams's finest works

recent career. 'It was certainly the biggest piece,' he says. It's also one of the most thorny and dissonant, with striking cacophonies of sound, and echoes of the film-score sumptuousness of Hollywood, as if the composer was channelling both Schoenberg and the popular culture into which Schoenberg was thrust, an alien and anomalous presence, in the Los Angeles of the 1930s and '40s. 'I took on a very serious theme, that dealt with American consciousness and our place in the world.'

When Adams speaks of *Doctor Atomic*, which yielded the material for his *Doctor Atomic Symphony*, it is with an increasingly blunt sense that the opera's seriousness is no longer an easy fit in American culture. He worries about the gravitas of younger composers, the marginal place of serious music in American society. He fears he may be pouring his life's energies into something that means very little to the vast majority of the population, that he has not found a way to be Duke Ellington. Although he has commissioned younger composers and supports their work, he also remembers visiting a music class in Aspen in the late 1990s and 'being shocked at how most of the questions had to do with careers'. They weren't digesting Xenakis or reading Cage but fretting about commissions and the arc of success.

But he is too steeped in the eternal recurrence of American generational angst to be a curmudgeon. 'I remember Elliott Carter snorting to a friend about *Nixon in China* and saying that my students could do something better than that,' he says of the still formidable avatar of American atonality. 'I worry that I'm turning into that sort of person because I'm dissatisfied with the music being written by younger composers. I think we are shying away from really treating music as something that is capable of dealing with the deeper issues of life.'

Some composers rebel all their lives, says Adams. Others need to find and keep an audience. 'I've always felt that if what I did didn't have some kind of audience, if it didn't show up on the cultural radar, then in a certain sense it was failing.'

Adams says he can only discuss his music once it's finished. When it is in progress, he doesn't know what to say. But his statements on music have been almost as much of an adventure as the music itself. His programme notes to his recordings are brilliantly written and evocative. His memoir is one of the finest composer memoirs of the past century. His conversation rolls and loops with the logic of his *Phrygian Gates*, constantly changing wavelength and modality. That ability to articulate a sense of what he is about, what his music is doing and how it relates to the larger world has been fundamental to building his loyal audience. 'I'm more of a practical composer, like Bach, very much involved in the music-making community,' he says.

And yet, very much in the spirit of American artists before him, Adams is also independent, self-contained, a force unto himself.

Just as it took years to know the influence of Bach on subsequent generations, it's not clear what Adams's influence will be on younger American artists. Steve Reich, Terry Riley and Philip Glass are revered for the supposed purity of their musical vision. Adams, especially in the 1980s and '90s, and in the wake of 'trickster' works such as the rollicking *Century Rolls* (1996), has been critically accused of muddying the waters of minimalism and indulging in a wanton and suspect eclecticism. But that criticism has faded as critics increasingly admire the consistent invention of his music, his variegated orchestration, his sense of humour and his seriousness of purpose.

Adams has broken all the rules but he has never shattered the old paradigm of composer. He has indulged the West Coast cool, and channelled it into music fundamentally grounded in the East Coast establishment institutions of orchestra and opera house. He has played with the pop sensibility and fed off its energies but arrived at a point where what matters is depth and emotional substance. He has inhabited the role of Yankee composer so long and so thoroughly that he is becoming a kind of sage.

'I don't think every composer has to write Mahler's Sixth Symphony,' he says. 'But it is difficult in this society, this American society, because pop culture is given such enormous prestige that every serious composer works under this suffocating cloud... So you are constantly questioning: Am I relevant? Does it even matter what I am doing there? I think it would be a great mistake to look at pop culture and try to ape it, and try to adopt its simplicities, and pay more attention to how many hits you get on your website or how many fans are in the audience, as opposed to saying something that is deep and complex and really describes the human condition.'

Adams is determined not to make that mistake but it should be noted, for the record, that his own website is busy and he has legions of fans, even in a country where art is not obligatory.

## JOHN ADAMS ON DISC



### Hallelujah Junction

Various artists  
Nonesuch (E) ②  
7559 79892-1

A great accompaniment to Adams's memoir of the same name, this features a thorough cross-section of his music from the early *Harmonium* and *Shaker Loops* to later works such as *The Dharma at Big Sur*.



### 'Earbox'

Various artists  
Nonesuch (E) ⑩  
7559 79453-2

The ultimate Adams collection, with more excerpts from major operas such as *Nixon and Klinghoffer* than 'Hallelujah Junction' offers.

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### Nixon in China

Soloists; Orchestra of St Luke's / de Waart  
Nonesuch (E) ③  
7559 79177-2

The classic recording of the classic Adams work, the one that established his serious reputation.



### Doctor Atomic Symphony

Saint Louis SO / Robertson  
Nonesuch (E) 7559 79932-8

Derived from material used in its namesake opera, this offers a good sense of Adams at his most cinematic, dissonant and dramatic.



### Century Rolls, etc

Emanuel Ax pf Cleveland Orchestra / Dohnányi  
Nonesuch (E) 7559 79607-2

Bright, busy and laugh-out-loud funny, *Century Rolls* is a piano concerto pumped up on endorphins.



### Harmonielehre

CBSO / Rattle  
EMI (E) 555051-2

A homage to Schoenberg - but more in spirit than in its musical material, which is dark and enveloping.

**RELEASED THIS MARCH**



### Harmonielehre. Short Ride in a Fast Machine

San Francisco SO / Tilson Thomas  
SFS Media (E) SFS0053

Live Davies Symphony Hall recordings.



# WHERE ARE WE GOING FROM HERE?

Gramophone critic Peter Quantrill looks at trends in new music and asks where they might be leading

Trends in new music are old news as soon as they're news at all. Some, though, add up to a pattern. 'There *is* a trend and critics are loath to point it out,' insists the New York-based composer and conductor Glen Roven, who has written for the film studio, Broadway and the concert hall. 'I think it's the return of melodic music. Not tonal, but gorgeous music. Listen to any Lowell Liebermann – his Flute Concerto! – and there it is: melodious, wondrous music. Or any of Jake Heggie's song-cycles. I find that, even with the most adventurous composers I know, melody is back. And I'm glad.'

When I pose the question of melody to the British composer Emily Howard, she wonders, as do I, if it ever went away. 'Birtwistle's music is all about melody, isn't it? I know there's an audience out there who don't hear it like that, but I think they're looking for something else.' From *Melencolia I*, through *Theseus Game* to the new Violin Concerto, melody – its transformation and ritual reassertion – has spun an Ariadne's thread through Birtwistle's music.

Both Roven and Howard are involved in projects to the power of 20. Roven contributed to the 'Five Borough Songbook', premiered in November 2011, for which 20 New York composers were asked to set a new song about the city. 'None of us heard the other composers' work until the concert,' recalls Roven. 'In fact, we weren't even told who the other composers were. Naturally, we were all concerned the concert wouldn't hold together, with so many different voices and styles. And indeed there were. But even though all the composers were writing in their unique styles, somehow it was a wonderfully coherent sound. I think it was because we all live and work and love and suffer in NYC.'

Howard, meanwhile, is one of 20 composers chosen to participate in the PRS for Music Foundation's New Music 20x12, a project to coincide with the London Olympics that will result in 20 12-minute commissions that aren't just concert openers you can ignore before the concerto. So far in the series, I've heard Howard Skempton and Anna Meredith make genuinely new music from church bells and orchestral bodies respectively. Howard's contribution is a chamber opera, *Zátopek!*, 'setting' the gold-medal winning 5000m run by Emil Zátopek in the 1952 Olympic Games.

Such large-scale commissioning projects remind us how, today, most composers can't just sit at their desks, if ever they could. Audiences and promoters demand more, and the solitude demanded by what Howard calls 'the practice of technique' is inevitably countered by the need to get out there and sell the results. In November last year, I attended a seminar at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama on composers and their audience. The composer and teacher Julian Philips remarked with feeling that 'the danger now is apathy – deafening apathy'. The composers present were united in frustrated agreement that today's UK audiences – as opposed to their counterparts in France and Germany – more often than not lack the basic vocabulary and understanding to engage with what they are hearing on anything more than a superficial level, while citing with approval Aaron Copland's comment: 'The thought of the gifted listener excites the composer in me.'

Echoing this, Howard notes how much more open and informed she found Viennese audiences during her residency at Wien Modern in November 2011, compared to the usual crowd at London's new music concerts. Roven views the creator-receiver interface quite differently: 'Look at the relationship that audiences had with composers in the 1950s to the 1980s. Those people were really writing for the other composers and not the audience; in fact they were outright hostile to the audience. And to my mind, their arrogance is still reverberating.' Digital and social media have certainly made the interface more complex: composers are, like the rest of us, in touch with more people, but less intimately, than ever before. Choirs and schools across the US and the UK were already singing Eric Whitacre's music in 2010, but with the idea and realisation of the 'virtual choir' – most recently, a sound collage in 2000 pieces for the choral work *Sleep* – his music went viral, as they say. Whitacre and others understand that singers

Reinventing the creator-receiver interface: Eric Whitacre and his 'virtual choir'







The Tempest: Thomas Adès's opera is becoming part of the standard repertoire

want melodies; opera stars want 'projects'; large audiences want reassurance, which they readily find in Nico Muhly and Morten Lauridsen, James Whitbourn and Francis Pott. Another defining characteristic of the eclectically flavoured musical soup of the past 30 years has been an urge to return to asking the big questions, and finding largely positive answers through a 'spiritual' mode of expression. Who could have predicted that Jonathan Harvey's *Weltethos*, the largest English oratorio since Tippett's *The Mask of Time* (1984), would be commissioned by the Berlin Philharmonic with a text by the Catholic theologian Hans Küng? Birtwistle and Michael Finnissy have made a secularised Christianity into a powerful channel for their contrasting idioms, while Harvey and Julian Anderson have drawn audiences into personal worlds of non-denominational spirituality.

Those important questions of life, love and hate were always what drew composers to write opera, the musical genre least amenable to the tenets of modernism. Opera companies in the UK and the US have been busy commissioning, with patchy success, but there's still the gratifying sense that *Peter Grimes* may soon no longer be the most recent entry to their regular repertoire. Both San Francisco Opera and English National Opera are staging three contemporary pieces this season. Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* and Adès's *The Tempest* are not going away. Birtwistle and John Adams are each building an operatic canon whose fascinations and peculiarities are fed by timeless myth and hot political events respectively – you might even call them the Wagner and Verdi of our time, and perhaps a few more sceptics may do that after ENO's valuable rehabilitation of Adams's *The Death of Klinghoffer* this spring. 'It's hard to break into the standard rep,' agrees Roven, 'but I believe it's more a matter of economics than quality or interest. San Antonio Opera just shut down and they were trying to sell *Don Giovanni*.'

A large and compulsory part of the curriculum for A level music in the UK is now analysis of music not through the notes but by way of its social and political context. When I suggest to a head of music at a London school that 17-year-old students might spend their time more profitably on the dots themselves, his eloquent answer is a resigned



Social media as storyline: Nico Muhly's *Two Boys*

## 'COMPOSERS CAN'T JUST SIT AT THEIR DESKS – AUDIENCES AND PROMOTERS DEMAND MORE'

shrug. Higher-education policies worldwide are turning university-based 'ivory towers' from myth into reality because the only answer to the money men is relevance or, in the current educational jargon, impact. Impact is instant. Music takes time. 'Why do things have to be instant?' wonders Howard. 'The entertainment culture is much more prominent in the UK than in Europe, and I feel that's a US influence. I also feel a sort of instant culture, and I see it in my pupils. They want to be able to do something immediately. But going to hear a new piece of music, you should want to experience something new, and even be challenged. To find something complex there that you want to keep going back to.'

### NEW MUSIC RECOMMENDED LISTENING

Here are some discoveries I made while researching this article. All the composers are under 40 and they each have a strong inner voice. None of this music is on CD. With a good internet connection, however, you can listen to it legally, for free. There's another trend...

**Joanna Bailie** Analogue [joannabailie.com](http://joannabailie.com)

**Charlotte Bray** Replay [soundcloud.com](http://soundcloud.com)

**Anthony Cheung** Fog Mobiles [youtube.com](http://youtube.com)

**Anna Clyne** Rewind [annaclayne.com](http://annaclayne.com)

**Edmund Finniss** Speak, Memory [edmundfinnis.com](http://edmundfinnis.com)

**Emily Howard** Magnetite [youtube.com](http://youtube.com)

**Anna Meredith** Black Prince Fury [soundcloud.com](http://soundcloud.com)

**Aaron Parker** Terra incognita [myspace.com](http://myspace.com)

**Christopher Trapani** Üsküdar [christophertapani.com](http://christophertapani.com)



New voice: Emily Howard



# THE BIRTWISTLE CONUNDRUM

For nearly 50 years, Harrison Birtwistle has been provoking audiences and fellow composers alike with his steadfast refusal to be categorised. Which makes him a somewhat challenging yet ultimately rewarding interviewee, finds Philip Clark



Panic at the Proms: Birtwistle's controversial work for the 1995 Last Night returned in 2007

Most writers dislike the process of transcribing long interviews with an intensity that touches on the pathological. And so it was that I sat at my desk early yesterday morning feeling less than chipper. A two-hour interview with Harrison Birtwistle needed transcribing, which meant a whole day locked into the grind-you-down of listening, typing, listening, typing. No work is harder than needing to prime your canvas just so the *actual* work can begin.

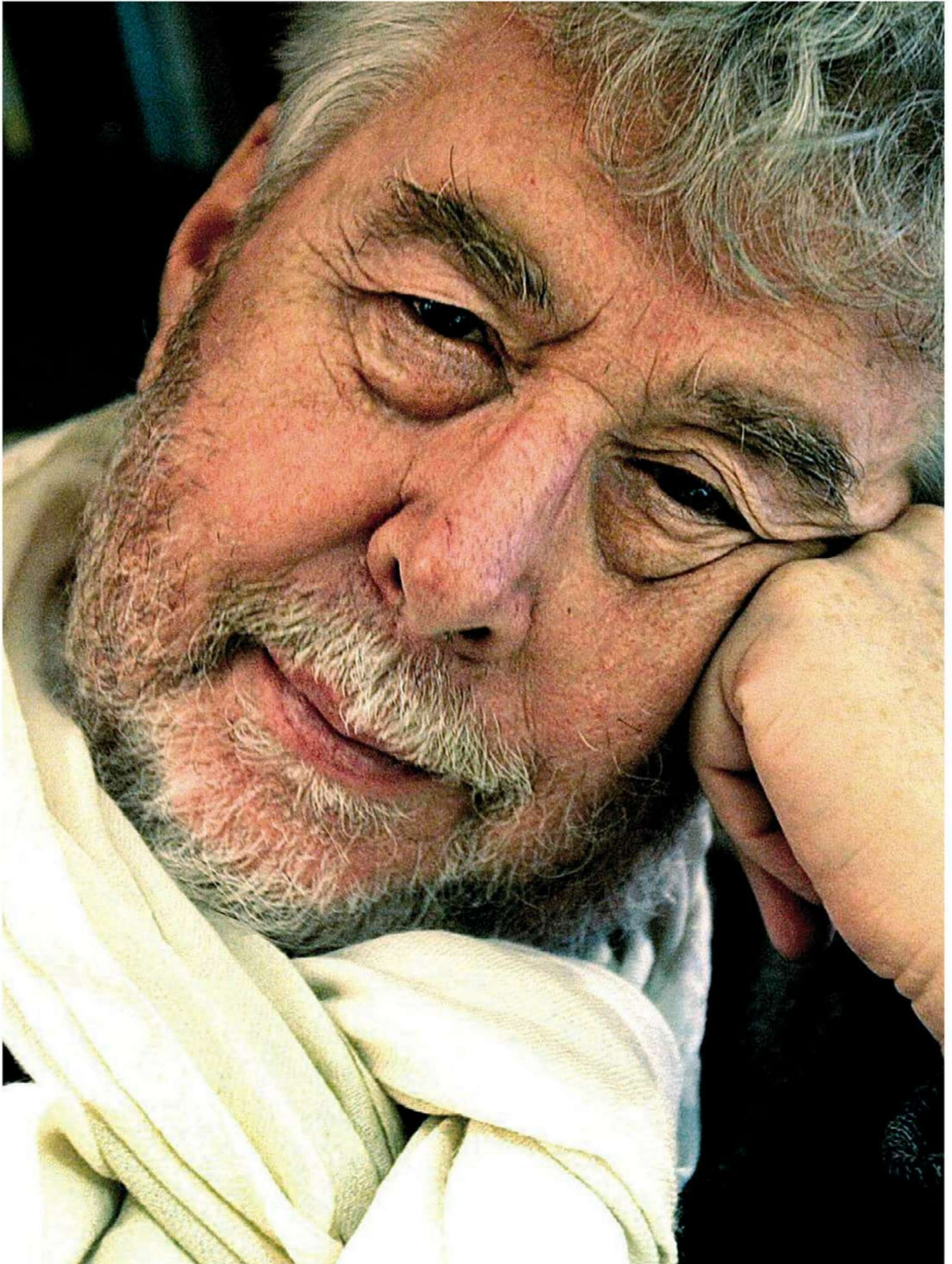
And the question this morning is how to knit those transcribed fragments into a narrative that gives you, the reader, a fair and representative impression of a private conversation held under the implicit understanding that whatever was said would at some point reach the public domain; that tells you about Birtwistle's recent directions and how new pieces like *Gigue Machine* and his Violin Concerto fit into a body of work with a history that stretches back to the 1960s; which functions as a piece of writing autonomous from the interview itself.

I'd like to think that Birtwistle might empathise. Most of our time together is spent discussing the intricacies of how extended structures might be pieced together from fragmentary ideas that paradoxically, and frustratingly if you're the guy trying to put them together, only reveal their full potential once you've locked them into place.

So how to begin? About his 2010 Violin Concerto and its problematic premiere, Birtwistle has intriguing and blunt things to say. Using the present as a tool to cut into the ancient history of how Birtwistle found his voice in pieces like *The Triumph of Time* – that might just work. But equally I could introduce the whiff of scandal. 'Read all about it in the *Daily Mail* as Sir Harrison Birtwistle has some innocent fun at the expense of Prince Charles in "*The Gramophone*.' Or I could take you to the emotional core of the interview: Birtwistle describing how, as an Englishman, an indefinable something about John Dowland touches him deeply – a moment that makes you realise the sort of lazy journalism that regularly categorises him as a 'stony-faced modernist' is spectacularly off-beam.

The jokey sting-in-the-tail of Birtwistle's answer to my first question – 'I'm sick of talking about this. Can't you get it from somewhere else?' – reminds me that you can't build a narrative if you don't have the appropriate material. I'd asked him about something I find somewhat numinous in its implication. Before he composed *Tragedia* in 1965 and *The Triumph of Time* a few years later, the two works that made his





PHOTOGRAPHY: SUZANNE KREITER/THE BOSTON GLOBE VIA GETTY IMAGES.  
C. CHRISTODOULOU/LEBRECHT MUSIC & ARTS



# 'IN COMPOSITION, APPLYING SOLUTIONS THAT ARE ALREADY HERE IS THE EASY WAY OUT'

name, the musical language in which he expressed them didn't exist. A void; then the Big Bang of *Tragoedia* opened up a new vein in British composition. Manufactured lineages are everywhere. Early Birtwistle comes out of Xenakis, Webern and Varèse, we're told, a photofit that never quite works. And the man himself doesn't understand it either. The most he can tell me about *Tragoedia* is 'the things that work just sort of happened'. Then he drags the conversation back to current concerns.

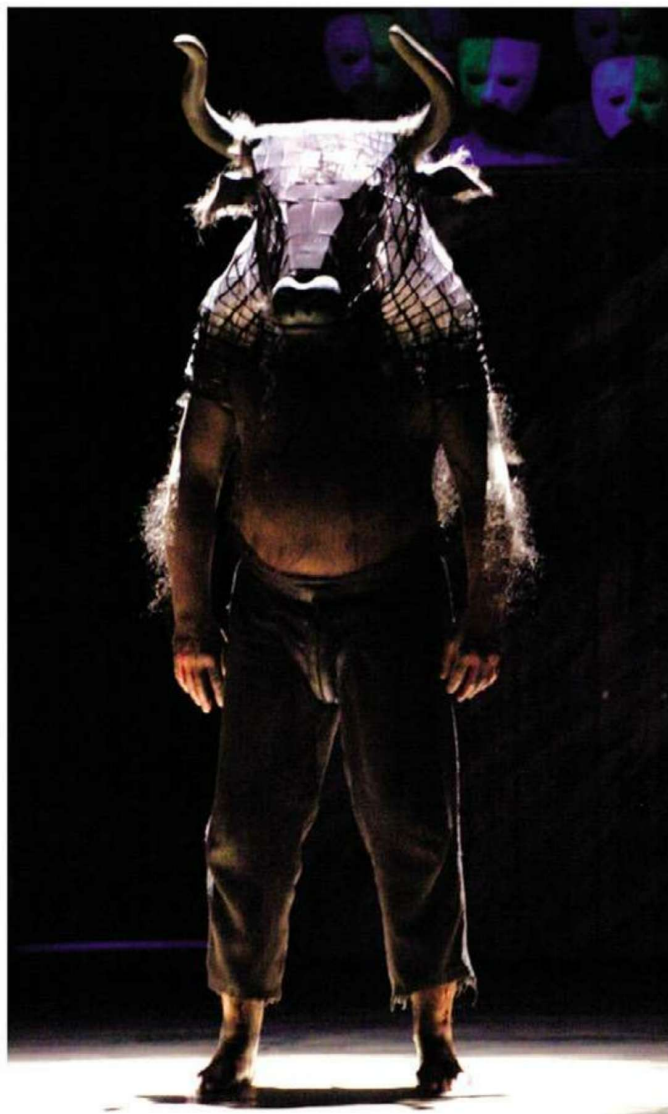
I've arrived at Birtwistle's house in Wiltshire on a difficult day. All morning he's been pushing ideas around for a new solo piano piece, which subsequently he calls *Gigue Machine*. 'You talk about those early pieces,' he explains, 'but they happened through the process of trying to define something. At the moment there's one aspect of this new piano piece I'm very clear about. I've found an idea but making the piece happen is very difficult. Applying solutions that are already there is an easy way out; then again, it doesn't have to be difficult. This thing which is very, very clear in your mind – as soon as you commit to it, it's like it doesn't exist. You have to fight for it, and usually the solution is not quite what you think it is.'

'When music starts to write itself, that can be dangerous too, because you can lose awareness of the material. So, on one hand, it's impossible, and on the other it's too easy.' As an account of how being creatively responsive to your material pulls both ways, that's pretty good. But I want to know more about this new piece. Where is Birtwistle at? 'I'm thinking of it like a fantasia in two parts,' he outlines, 'but it's two musics, not two voices. It's an interplay between something linear and sonorous against something else which is very *staccato*. To properly hear the distinction between two parts, it needs to be as severe as that. I'm finding a way of writing for the piano.'

As an analogy, Birtwistle mentions household do-it-yourself; only when you've finished your shelves or tiling do you know how to do the job. That analogy doesn't quite stack up, I suggest, because Birtwistle has written solo piano music before: *Précis* in 1960, *Harrison's Clocks* in 1998, *Ostinato with Melody* in 2000. 'But I don't gain from it. There's nothing learnt in that sense, because what I'm writing now is so different. At least I hope it is,' he rebuts.

Birtwistle's matter-of-fact way of explaining his music appeals to me enormously. He deploys a two-pronged approach. There's the craft of composition, and on that level he really does talk about pieces like he's fitting a ballcock into a cistern – the pragmatic skill of making nut A slot inside bolt B. That's the work of a composer. But the music touches on mysteries that can't easily be explained away. I ask him about Humphrey Searle and Elisabeth Lutyens, composers prepared to engage with wider notions of 'modernism' than your average British composer during the 1950s. Birtwistle remembers copying for Searle (Tippett and Mátyás Seiber too) and, like 'any thinking music lover', he says, his ideas did impinge a bit. But serialism, or even serial-derived music, was never for him.

'It couldn't produce the harmony I wanted,' he says. 'It was the wrong



The Minotaur: John Tomlinson in the title-role at the 2008 Covent Garden premiere



Christian Tetzlaff, Marcelo Lehninger and the composer at the premiere of Birtwistle's Violin Concerto with the Boston Symphony Orchestra



material, like trying to make a figure in clay that should have been in wood. Is the music being expressed through the tone row? Or the tone row being expressed through the music? I discovered I couldn't care less either way. I was interested in the music in my head.'

When I mention another local curiosity – the generic instrumental sonata, with its three-movement fast/slow/a little bit faster structure, to which British composers of a certain mindset seem to have bought the franchise – Birtwistle chuckles. 'I wouldn't know how to do that,' he tells me. But for all he insists that each new composition 'has its own solution', I wonder how true that can be. The NMC disc of his orchestral works *Night's Black Bird*, *The Shadow of Night* and *The Cry of Anubis*, which won the Contemporary category at last year's Gramophone Awards, includes music originally written for the Cleveland Orchestra. The first piece was premiered by Franz Welser-Möst, the second by Christoph von Dohnányi. A cast and crew beyond the reach of most composers. Playing mischief, I suggest that only composers who 'know' how to write orchestral music are handed opportunities like that. A long silence.

'I didn't "know" how to write *Night's Black Bird* or *The Shadow of Night* – I found a way of doing those pieces,' he reflects. 'It's true that when I wrote *The Triumph of Time* and *Earth Dances* I had nothing to lose. But there's an orchestral piece called *Chorales* that predates *The Triumph of Time* which doesn't work at all; suddenly with *Triumph of Time* the road ahead became clear. I'm trying to solve new problems every time.'

I put it to Birtwistle that his feeling for line – no matter how layered his structures become, a unifying line is usually implied – is as true for *The Triumph of Time* in 1971 as it is for *The Shadow of Night* in 2002. And when I suggest that serially organised music doesn't especially lend itself to line, he concurs. 'You know that *The Shadow of Night* and *Night's Black Bird* are connected? When I finished *Shadow of Night*, I had material left over and thought it'd be interesting to write another version, but with an internal journey using these leftovers. But I couldn't find a context for the material I hadn't used. Then the piece started to express itself anyway.'

*The Shadow of Night* and *Night's Black Bird* give me the opening I've been looking for to discuss Birtwistle's relationship to England and 'English Music', and I tread carefully...at first. These two orchestral works are rooted in Birtwistle's fascination with Elizabethan poets and composers, an obsession already explored in his totemic, Albrecht Dürer-inspired *Melencolia I* for clarinet and strings. *Shadow of Night* unfolds out of a three-note cell (heard in the piccolo first) from John Dowland's song 'In darkness let me dwell'. But why is Birtwistle entranced? Is it, perhaps, because this material isn't 'tainted' by the goal-orientated 'Romantic' harmony that has never been a part of Birtwistle's lexicon?

'Maybe that's right. There's a lyrical expression in Dowland that isn't like anything else in music. It shows itself again in Purcell, then disappears. But these orchestral pieces aren't a self-conscious attempt to occupy that material. You can never find the essence of something simply by copying it. When people say "I was inspired by", what they usually mean is that they filched the idea. But there's always a part of whatever you like that you can't have.'

Then he leans over conspiratorially. 'There was a very funny television programme I saw a while ago with, er, Prince Charles talking about Parry. Did you see it? So he discovered Parry, did Prince Charles, and they played all this English music meant to reflect mystical English landscape. Fine, except there wasn't a note of it that didn't sound like Schumann or Brahms. It's nothing to do with England!' Birtwistle's feeling for Dowland touches an English sensibility that runs deeper than picturesque landscape? 'Yes. But I think you can overdo it. You want more tea?'

If an Englishman offers you tea, clearly he trusts you, so I probe deeper. Why would a composer so palpably uncomfortable with formal

protocol, who provoked Middle England to write into the *Radio Times* when he was featured at the Last Night of the Proms, want to accept a knighthood? Andrew Lloyd Webber and Cliff Richard, perhaps, but c'mon! 'It's strange, isn't it? I believe there are people who spend their lives trying to get knighthoods. I didn't strive for it, and certainly knew the reasons why I shouldn't accept it. Peter Hall once told me the only thing his knighthood's been good for is impressing his bank manager. But my mother would have been proud.' So he accepted it on her behalf? 'Something like that.'

With time running out – it's a long way back to London from Wiltshire – Birtwistle plays me the first performance of his Violin Concerto and fills me in about that awkward premiere. The Boston Symphony Orchestra's chief conductor, James Levine, who had been meant to conduct, pulled out due to health issues 'and the conductor we had couldn't quite move it on'. He tells me that the little duet sequences he'd implanted inside the body of the orchestra between the soloist and piccolo, flute, cello, oboe and bassoon 'didn't quite work as well as I'd hoped', this despite the piece being 'very carefully scored'.

'Until you're sitting there during the performance you can't know how the piece will move through time. It's like in Greek drama: the chorus can shout "Death" or "Alleluia" together, but if you want to understand anything more complex, they can speak spontaneously but never together. And writing this concerto, you can't deny the expressive quality of the violin, but you mustn't get off on it. Lyricism has to run deeper than lyrical melody. It's about identifying a lyric quality and doing something that hasn't been done before. The goal I set myself – I wanted to hear everything the violin played – I succeeded in doing that. That I can say. I hear the register of the orchestra from top to bottom, and where the violin can speak within it; like aeroplanes have flight paths.'

So what went wrong with the duets? A shrug. 'Perhaps nothing.' A second shrug. 'Stuff goes wrong. You can't control everything, you know...'

## G

## ESSENTIAL BIRTWISTLE LISTENING



**Punch and Judy**  
Soloists; London Sinfonietta / David Atherton

NMC (M) NMCD138 (9/07)

First performed at Aldeburgh in 1968, Birtwistle's ritualistic chamber opera apparently had Britten and Pears running back to the Red House for sanctuary.



**The Mask of Orpheus**  
Soloists; BBC SO / Andrew Davis

NMC (C) NMCD050 (12/97)

Started in the aftermath of *Punch and Judy*, *The Mask of Orpheus* is Birtwistle's defining stage work: narratives viewed from different perspectives and strikingly fresh vocal writing. Such is its scale and technical complexity, it had to wait until 1986 for its ENO premiere.



**Earth Dances.**  
**Theseus Game**  
Ensemble Modern Orchestra / Pierre Boulez

DG (M) (B) 477 0702GH

*Earth Dances* appeared hot on the heels of *The Mask of Orpheus* and Birtwistle went global. This 2004

Boulez performance is remarkable for its linear clarity.



**Secret Theatre.**  
**Tragoedia, etc**

Ens Intercontemporain / Pierre Boulez

DG (M) (B) 439 910-2GH (9/95)

*Tragoedia* is effectively Birtwistle's 'Opus One' and still packs a punch. *Secret Theatre* is a brain-stretching instrumental labyrinth from the 1980s.



**Pulse Shadows**

Claron McFadden; Arditti Quartet; Nash Ensemble / Reinbert de Leeuw

Teldec (C) 3984 26867-2 (3/02)

Scored for soprano, ensemble and string quartet, *Pulse Shadows* is a deeply considered meditation on poetry by Paul Celan.



**Night's Black Bird.**  
**The Shadow of Night**  
Hallé Orchestra / Ryan Wigglesworth

NMC (C) NMCD156 (10/11)

Birtwistle's most recent orchestral disc: two pieces shrouded in Elizabethan melancholy.

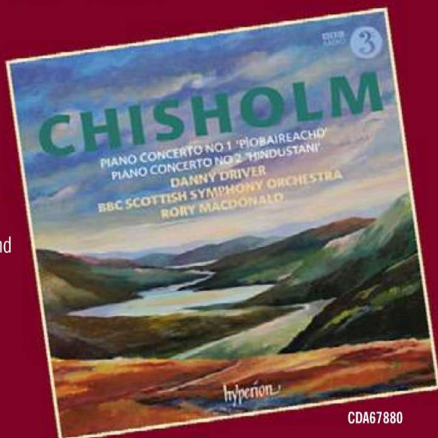


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**BBC SCOTTISH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**  
**RORY MACDONALD** conductor

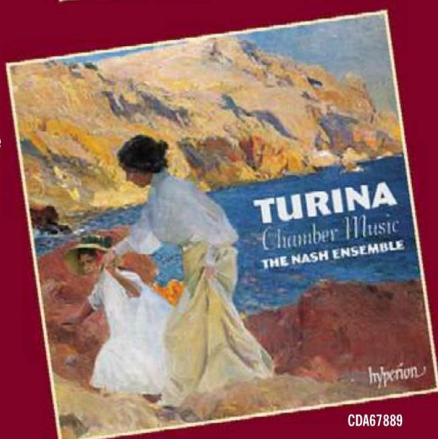


CDA67880

## JOAQUÍN TURINA *Chamber Music*

The Nash Ensemble performs the captivating chamber works of Joaquín Turina, whose music intriguingly blends the sensuality of Andalusian folk melody and rhythm with 20th-century French sophistication gleaned from his studies in Paris.

**THE NASH ENSEMBLE**

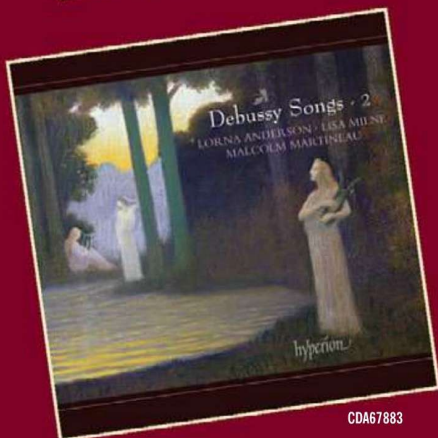


CDA67889

## CLAUDE DEBUSSY *Songs – 2*

Acclaimed sopranos, and frequent Hyperion guest artists, Lorna Anderson and Lisa Milne, both praised for their masterful interpretations of French music, join Malcolm Martineau for his second volume of Debussy's sensual, impressionistic songs.

**LORNA ANDERSON** soprano  
**LISA MILNE** soprano  
**MALCOLM MARTINEAU** piano



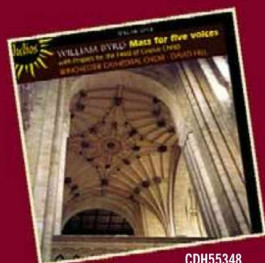
CDA67883



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**DAVID HILL** conductor

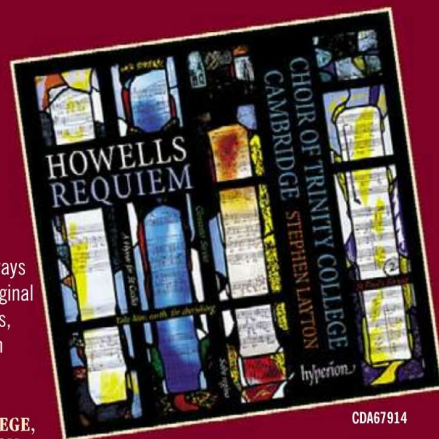


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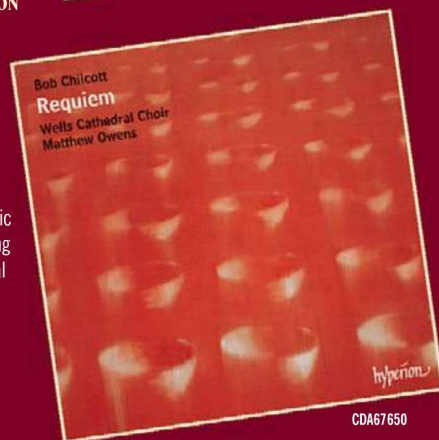


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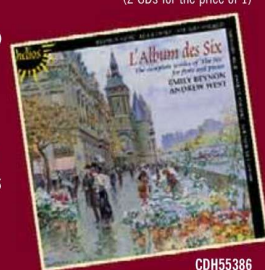
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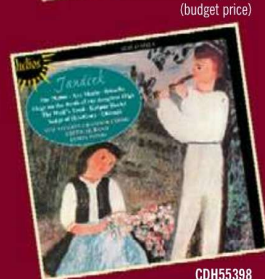
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# GRAMOPHONE *Reviews*

April 2012



Members of the Vienna Philharmonic play waltzes live in Café Sperl ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 60**

## KEY TO SYMBOLS

- G** **Gramophone Choice**  
We name our best 12 recordings reviewed in each issue
- C** **Critic's Choice**  
Awarded by a reviewer who feels a recording deserves particularly singling out
- G** **Gramophone Player**  
Hear a high-quality sample of the music online
- R** Reissue
- H** Historic
- 2** Compact disc (number of discs in set)
- T** Text(s) included
- t** translation(s) included
- S** Synopsis included
- N** Notes included
- s** subtitles included
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- DVD** DVD video
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## GRAMOPHONE *Reviewers*



**Jeremy Nicholas**

I sometimes think I haven't progressed much since my school days when the piano (first lesson aged four), acting (first title-role aged 10), listening to music, playing the organ, song-writing and composing were my main interests. Since then, the autodidactic meandering I call my career has been devoted to them. I have been lucky to have learned from the best. As a novice broadcaster the most useful advice I ever had was from the sorely missed Michael Oliver: 'Don't sell. Offer.' A Sony Gold Award followed. My biography of Leopold Godowsky led to invitations to review recordings. For a (self-)critical Virgo, with an eclectic collection in all formats, it seemed a natural progression.

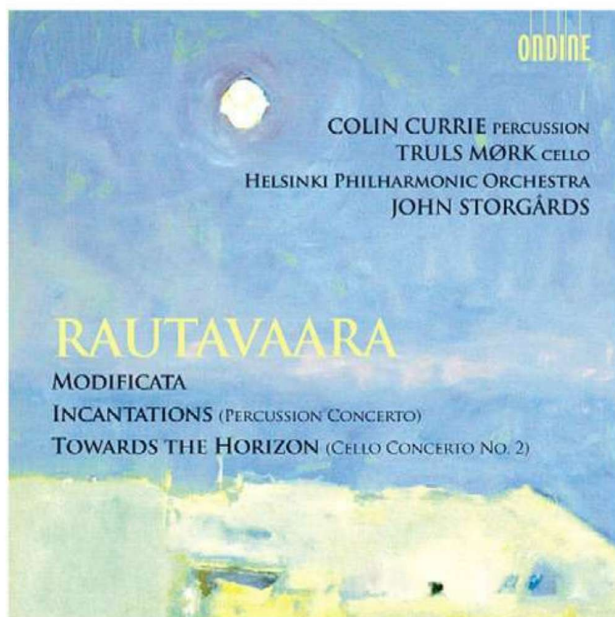
One theatre director I auditioned four years ago said just two words before I began: 'Amaze me.' He didn't mean by being loud or flashy. He was looking, as I do when listening to a performance, for a unique voice with something compelling to say: the wow factor. Most recordings don't have it, they are just 'extremely accomplished' or 'very good'. Moriz Rosenthal playing a Chopin waltz (APR) has it. So has Michael Collins in his new Weber Clarinet Concertos recording (Chandos), along with the amazing Howard Shelley in Dobrzyński's Piano Concerto, Op 2, conducted live from the keyboard for the Fryderyk Chopin Institute. Wow!

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|-------------------|------------------------|
| Andrew Achenbach  | Ivan Moody             |
| Nalen Anthoni     | Bryce Morrison         |
| Mike Ashman       | <b>Jeremy Nicholas</b> |
| Philip Clark      | Christopher Nickol     |
| Rob Cowan*        | Geoffrey Norris        |
| Justin Davidson   | Richard Osborne        |
| Jeremy Dibble     | Stephen Plaistow       |
| Peter Dickinson   | Peter Quantrell        |
| Jed Distler       | Guy Rickards           |
| Duncan Druce      | Malcolm Riley          |
| Adrian Edwards    | Marc Rochester         |
| Richard Fairman   | Julie Anne Sadie       |
| David Fallows     | Edward Seckerson       |
| David Fanning     | Pwyll ap Sion          |
| Iain Fenlon       | Harriet Smith          |
| Fabrice Fitch     | Ken Smith              |
| Jonathan          | David Patrick Stearns  |
| Freeman-Attwood   | David Threasher        |
| Edward Greenfield | David Vickers          |
| David Gutman      | John Warrack           |
| Lindsay Kemp      | Richard Whitehouse     |
| Philip Kennicott  | Arnold Whittall        |
| Tess Knighton     | Richard Wigmore        |
| Andrew Lamb       | William Yeoman         |
| Richard Lawrence  |                        |
| Ivan March        |                        |

\* Contributing Editor



# Recording of the Month



*'Storgårds and the Helsinki Philharmonic give exemplary support in the big-boned textures of both concertos but also shine on their own'*

*Guy Rickards delights in newly recorded works by the man Sibelius championed*

## Rautavaara

Cello Concerto No 2, 'Towards the Horizon'<sup>a</sup>.

Modificata. Percussion Concerto, 'Incantations'<sup>b</sup>

<sup>b</sup>Colin Currie perc<sup>a</sup>Truls Mørk vc

Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra / John Storgårds

Online © ODE1178-2 (70' • DDD)

As three works are listed on this superbly recorded new Ondine release, buyers may be surprised to learn that, in a sense, it contains four. This is a consequence of Rautavaara's revision in 2003 of one of his earliest 12-note works, the three-movement suite *Modificata* (1957). The main change was the replacement of the original first movement by *Modificata*'s single-span successor of the same year, *Praevariata*. It is not the first time the composer has recycled music written in one format into another: the composition in many ways the natural successor to *Modificata* and *Praevariata*, the totally serial *Arabescata*, was eventually press-ganged into service as his Fourth Symphony when Rautavaara withdrew that twice-written piece in the 1980s. As Kimmo Korhonen notes in the booklet, both *Modificata* and *Praevariata* were 'very similar...in their mood and style' so they dovetail neatly together. The beguilingly scored result provides a fascinating window into the composer's modernist past. For

those who know this composer mainly for his later, post-modernist output – most rewardingly contained in works like the Fifth and Seventh (*Angel of Light*) Symphonies and many of the concertos, *Modificata* may come as a shock. The harmonic style is quite different to his more familiar later idiom but the instrumental resource (like that of his younger contemporary Paavo Heininen) is fully evident in its imaginative deployment. It is the delicacy of the writing and the sonorities that is so winning (to my ears anyway) and which raises this work – even in its later, merged version – above the usual level of interesting apprentice outpouring. Orchestra and conductor understand this and in the concluding *Affectio* go hell-for-leather in raising the roof.

*Modificata* makes an intriguing filler between Rautavaara's latest, possibly last, pair of concertos. His first concerto was for cello, so there is fitting symmetry in concluding his set with a second (at least so he has declared), luminously scored, with a winning flow of melody, the effortlessness of which is strenuously achieved. In essence, *Towards the Horizon* (2008-09) is a single-movement set of variations topped and tailed by an Introduction presenting the Theme and a

large-scale Finale in which all the threads are drawn together. The near-unbroken line of the cello part, which sings almost without pause, it seems, helps to make the main set of variations in the central span a seamless entity. Given the valedictory nature of the music, the magical close fading out high into the air like a modern retake on *The Lark Ascending*, there is a temptation to see in this work the composer's direct contemplation of the infinite – his equivalent perhaps of Shostakovich's late quartets, but decidedly more positive and serene in expression (yet unblinkingly clear). The Concerto was written for Mørk, who had to pull out of the premiere due to illness; Adam Tatarsky substituted. Here Mørk proves a dedicated exponent, by turns rapt, athletic and impassioned in his delivery. Korhonen's claim that *Towards the Horizon* is the last of Rautavaara's '12 concertos' is questionable – Ondine themselves previously issued a box-set of the '12 concertos' before the present pair were recorded; but even discarding the brief *Ballade* for harp and strings, the tally remains 13. (It is unclear which other one should give way: *Cantus arcticus*, perhaps?)

The Percussion Concerto *Incantations* (2008) is more dramatic in tone from bar 1,






Towards the Horizon: Rautavaara finds warmth in Nordic landscapes

Colin Currie, dedicatee and soloist in *Incantations*

its fast-slow-fast design an orthodox but compelling vehicle for Currie's blistering virtuosity (the soloist provides his own cadenza, too, in the *Animato* finale). The evocative title reflects Rautavaara's belief (to quote Korhonen) 'that there is much in common between shamanism and composition: a shaman is a mediator between human beings and the hereafter, and a composer too...is more a mediator than a creator'. So one could regard each movement as a spell or incantation conjured

between the listener and the otherworld. But whereas in *Towards the Horizon* there is a specifically personal viewpoint expressed (the composer's own), in *Incantations* it is more generalised and with more sense of dialogue. However one may interpret Rautavaara's title – which, by the way, was selected late in the composition process – the music possesses a powerfully elemental undertow.

This shows itself most clearly in the beautiful central *Espressivo*, which affords perfectly judged musical and textural contrast after the vigorous opening *Pesante* and sets up the dance-like finale superbly. Colin Currie, for whom the concerto was written and who premiered it in London in 2009, reprises that scintillating performance in a barnstorming account caught splendidly in Ondine's superlative sound. John Storgårds and the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra give exemplary support in the big-boned textures of both concertos but also shine on their own in *Modificata*.

This is an immensely noteworthy issue, not as a potential epitaph for Rautavaara the concerto-composer but for the quality of the music-making itself – and sure, let's hope it does not prove the close of Rautavaara's career as concerto-composer. 

## Listening points

Your guide to the disc's memorable moments

### Track 1 Cello Concerto No 2, from 0'50"

After some spiky late-Rautavaarian harmonies, the cello intones the lovely main theme, which is then varied throughout the rest of the concerto.

### Track 3 Cello Concerto No 2, Finale, from 1'40"

Note Rautavaara's mellifluous, sensitive writing for the cello in an outpouring of almost endless melody. Splendid playing from Mørk and the Helsinki woodwinds.

### Track 4 'Praeluara', start

What strikes the ear first is not the serial rigour but the beguiling delicacy of the percussion-led sonorities and the teasing air of mystery.

### Track 5 'Meditatio', from 2'15"

Halfway through this desolate 'Meditatio', a chirpy interlude starts. First it toys with the idea of becoming a march, before appearing to vanish into the ether

### Track 6 Percussion Concerto, 1st movt, from 1'15"

The soloist's quiet first entry reaches its climax 45 seconds later as the unpitched percussion are unleashed, exemplifying the virtuosity Currie excels at.

### Track 7 Percussion Concerto, 2nd movt, from start

Orchestra and soloist are heard in ravishing harmony here, declaiming and elaborating Rautavaara's main theme.

 Visit the Gramophone Player at [gramophone.co.uk](http://gramophone.co.uk) to hear an excerpt from this issue's Recording of the Month



# Orchestral



## Peter Quantrill reviews Christian Thielemann's Beethoven cycle:

*'Second subjects and cadences arrive with the condescending turn and leathery creak of a man of parts after dinner'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 44**



## Bryce Morrison reviews Liszt and Tchaikovsky from Tiempo:

*'He turns up the heat to near boiling point, unapologetically flaunting his virtuoso bird-of-paradise feathers'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 47**

## JS Bach

Recorder Concertos – BWV1053; BWV1055; 'BWV1059'; after arias from Cantatas Nos 32 & 215 (transc Wind). Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier, BWV731  
**Erik Bosgraaf** / **Ensemble Cordevento**  
Brilliant Classics © 94296 (59' • DDD)



### Cantata arias arranged as recorder concertos

It is normal for enterprising musicians to find ways to adapt Bach's compositions to fit their instruments, whether they play saxophones, marimba or guitar. Ensemble Cordevento's six period instrumentalists creatively construct four recorder concertos, despite the inconvenient fact that Bach is not known to have written any. Consultant musicologist Thimo Wind provides a booklet essay that is admirable for its sensible and detailed acknowledgment of the methods and aims used in the quest to discover 'what might Bach have done, or could he have done, if he had written concertos for the recorder?'

The first concerto has its first and third movements adapted from quick arias in the secular cantata *Preise dein Glücke, gesegnetes Sachsen* (BWV215, written to honour the visit of August III to Leipzig in 1734), while the slow movement is based on an aria from the dialogue cantata *Liebster Jesu, mein Verlangen* (BWV32). Erik Bosgraaf's recorder-playing is fluent and lively in fast music, and his five colleagues (single strings and harpsichord) provide accompaniments that are lean, stylish and precise. In the central Siciliano of a concerto modelled after the Harpsichord Concerto in E major (BWV1053), Bosgraaf plays quite forcefully but not at the expense of *cantabile* phrasing. His rapid passagework is impressive in the *Allegro* that commences in a concerto transposed up a semitone from BWV1055 (which the Neue Bach Ausgabe speculates might have been intended for an oboe d'amore), and Ensemble Cordevento's playing of fast music is joyful and accomplished.

David Vickers

## Bate • Reizenstein

**Bate** Piano Concerto No 2, Op 28<sup>n</sup>. Sinfonietta No 1, Op 22 **Reizenstein** Piano Concerto No 2<sup>n</sup>

<sup>a</sup>**Victor Sangiorgio** *pf*

**Royal Scottish National Orchestra / Martin Yates**  
Dutton Epoch © CDLX7282 (70' • DDD)



### Piano concertos from two Hindemith pupils

This is another foray into totally unexplored territory where Lewis Foreman and Dutton have lifted the dust off forgotten scores and got them on to CD. Stanley Bate has already had a good innings, with two symphonies (4/10, 4/11) and a viola concerto. He was a pupil of Vaughan Williams and then hedged his bets by studying with both Hindemith and Boulanger, who had flattering things to say about him. He married Peggy Glanville-Hicks, the Australian composer, and they lived in New York during the war. Bate had some success there when Beecham conducted the Second Piano Concerto, while the First Sinfonietta was given at the ISCM in California, both in 1942. But after divorcing and returning to London, Bate never got back on form and declined to an early death. Reizenstein was also a pupil of Hindemith – it shows – and came to the UK in the first wave of Jewish immigration in 1934.

The two piano concertos here, steeped in mid-20th-century rhetoric, were premiered by the composers themselves in prominent performances. The Reizenstein is relentlessly energetic in the outer movements but, as a Hindemith pupil, he knew about continuity so the pace and the virtuosity never let up, except in a pleasantly cool if unmemorable slow movement. Bate's concerto is much less disciplined. His almost comic opening presages debts to Prokofiev; there's a meandering slow movement and a fizzing finale with stock-in-trade figurations. Agreeable mainstream stuff: Sangiorgio is a real virtuoso and these performances under Martin Yates are truly outstanding.

Peter Dickinson

## Beethoven

Symphonies Nos 1-9

**Annette Dasch** *sop* **Mihoku Fujimura** *mez*

**Piotr Beczala** *ten* **Georg Zeppenfeld** *bass*

**Vienna Singverein; Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra / Christian Thielemann**

Sony © 88697 92717-2 (6h 11 • DDD);  
C Major Entertainment © 705308;  
© 707204 (7h 26' + 8h 30' • 16:9 •  
DTS-HD MA 5.0, DTS 5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)  
DVDs and Blu-rays include documentaries  
connected to each symphony



### Thielemann's Beethoven cycle from Vienna – complete with documentaries

Listen to the *Scherzos* and Minuets of the first four symphonies. They fairly spring out of the blocks with a muscular tension that brooks no obstacle or opposition, the orchestra a perfectly weighted body in total control of its limbs and members. The first two symphonies *in toto* bristle with danger, wit and surprise. Why are these qualities signally lacking from the rest of the set? You won't understand how the *Eroica*'s first movement can last almost 20 minutes until you reach the start of the development section. By the time we reach its climax, the point of its crushing dissonance has been lost. If Beethoven crossed a Rubicon with the Third – and if he knew he did – then he pulled on seven-league boots to trudge the rest of the way.

Please let's forget facile comparisons with great and grand maestros of old. Except for the occasional blatant homage such as the eight-second pause before the 'Ode to Joy' theme, these are not throwback recordings. If you respect tradition, Thielemann noted at his recent admission to honorary membership of the Royal Academy of Music, you will renew it – and in a personal way. It's all the more disappointing, then, to find that most of these performances seem contrived as a luxuriously appointed bulwark against feared forces of change and dogma. Momentum, when gained, is continually arrested. Second subjects and cadences arrive with the condescending turn and leathery creak of a man of parts after dinner who, having held forth for a while, gestures and enquires, 'And what do you think, young man?'

The concert films show an orchestra in happy union with its conductor, powerful and agile as we'd expect, though too often caught





Happy union: Christian Thielemann conducts the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra in Beethoven at the Musikverein

out (more obviously on CD) when Thielemann's accentuation of a line, usually a bass line, creates two simultaneous tempi, as in the finales of the Fifth and Seventh. Those are not so heavily marked as on his 1996 recordings for DG, but sleek sensibility isn't an adequate substitute for raw conviction in this music. Anyway, there are enough moments of imprecise chording and articulation to rule out the set for those who are more exercised by technical slips on repeated listening than interpretative mannerisms, which are legion. When Mahler bawled out this orchestra and told them that tradition was just laziness, he knew his target.

The set of hour-long documentaries for each symphony is a lot of pie and not many cherries. I find it telling that Thielemann is most animated when discussing Beethoven's influence on Strauss and Wagner: in performance, the Ninth's *Scherzo* is more Fasolt than Fafner. The horn calls that give such a kick to Böhm's recording have gone missing, and so has the B-section repeat in the first half of the movement. You don't need the conductor to explain that he finds no comedy in symphonic music after you've heard his Eighth, 'a friendly late farewell', which in discussion takes a quarter of an hour to move on from the exposition of the first movement. The deterministic viewpoint cultivated by Thielemann and his interlocutor, Joachim

Kaiser, sees the Fourth as 'a beautifully composed anticlimax'. He sensibly observes that the bass ostinato in the *Adagio* composes a strict tempo into the music – and then ignores or forgets his aperçu in performance, disastrously so in the perfumed exchange of scales between the winds at the movement's turning point. 'To do nothing requires 150 per cent concentration,' remarks Thielemann and, sad to say, they do it very well. To remember Carlos Kleiber's whining but winning insistence on 'The-rese, The-rese' in the illicit rehearsal tape exhumed for Robert Dornhelm's documentary is to be reminded that the past really is another country, even in Vienna.

**Peter Quantrill**

## Britten • Shostakovich

**Britten** Symphony for Cello and Orchestra, Op 68

**Shostakovich** Cello Concerto No 1, Op 107

**Johannes Moser** vc

**WDR Symphony Orchestra, Cologne / Pietari Inkinen**

Hänssler Classic © CD98 643 (62' • DDD)



### High-flying cellist in Rostropovich favourites

The shadow of Rostropovich falls long over this particular coupling. Not only were both works dedicated to him but he also left us with multiple recordings including, on one occasion, the same pairing from EMI where the Britten

was the premiere performance, live under the composer's baton in Moscow. Although Johannes Moser's disc boasts a good modern recording, with the cello marginally on the close side, it is hard to make comparisons fairly. In the Shostakovich, Moser and his conductor, Pietari Inkinen, set properly urgent speeds in the outer movements, though the Cologne winds could do with more bite. The slow movement is more relaxed, not always to its benefit, and though Moser's cello sings sweetly in the high cantilena, the last ounce of intensity is missing.

The Britten is similar. Moser is again a truthful guide, hitting timings very close to the composer's own, and keeps a judicious balance between discipline and feeling. In the long cadenza he typically finds time for thoughtful expression, not just a display of technical skills. The darker resonance that envelops this performance comes largely from the more mellow orchestral playing, where Britten in his studio recording is contrastingly lean and mean, not to say fearsomely bright (listen to the solo trumpet, marked *brillante*, that heralds the Passacaglia). In making comparisons afresh, it is extraordinary how economical Rostropovich was in his effects and how powerfully they always hit home. He is indispensable in both these concertos but Moser's well-considered performances offer a viable modern alternative.

**Richard Fairman**



Selected comparison – coupled as above:

Rostropovich, Moscow PO, Britten, Rozhdestvensky  
(EMI) 562827-2

Britten – selected comparison:

Rostropovich, ECO, Britten (9/89) (LOND) 425 100-2LM

## Daugherty

Fire and Blood<sup>a</sup>. Flamingo. Ladder to the Moon<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Alexandre da Costa *vn*

Montreal Symphony Orchestra / Pedro Halffter

Warner Classics © 2546 67195-7 (61' • DDD)



### Canadian portrait of the ever-eclectic Daugherty

Michael Daugherty, now in his later fifties, is one of the most frequently performed American composers and has held many awards and orchestral residences. Before he obtained his degrees, worked with jazz musicians and had a spell at IRCAM, his background was in rock and funk, and it shows in his rhythmic approach. He's not always serious – he wrote *Elvis Everywhere* for three Elvis impersonators and string quartet (the Kronos). *Flamingo* (1991), for two tambourines and orchestra, is a riot inspired by plastic garden flamingos, real ones in Florida and the flamenco dance.

*Ladder to the Moon* (2006) was commissioned by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and is a response to Georgia O'Keeffe's skyscraper paintings from the 1930s. Wonderful pictures; but at times the music wanders and the second piece plays oddly with the opening motif of the finale of Mozart's *Jupiter Symphony*.

*Fire and Blood* (2003), sometimes here called a violin concerto, is another bold attempt to write the big piece that might compete with the romantic warhorses. Daugherty's sources are again visual – the murals of the Mexican painter Diego Rivera at the Detroit Institute of Arts. The first movement, 'Volcanoes', evokes factory furnaces; the second is a tribute to Rivera's wife, the painter Frida Kahlo, including a kind of Mexican folksong; and the last takes us to the 'Assembly Line', reflecting its relentless pace. Daugherty's approach is illustrative in ways that a film might clarify and always vivid in these performances.

Peter Dickinson

## Dvořák

Violin Concerto, Op 53 B108<sup>a</sup>. Romance, Op 11 B39<sup>a</sup>.

Four Romantic Pieces, Op 75 B150<sup>b</sup>

Hrachya Avanesyan *vn* <sup>b</sup>Marianna Shirinyan *pf*

<sup>a</sup>Sinfonia Varsovia / Augustin Dumay

Fuga Libera © FUG588 (62' • DDD)



### Dvořák from the 2006 winner of the Menuhin Competition

Hrachya Avanesyan is clearly a sensitive musician and highly accomplished; his

performances on this disc, enlivened by imaginative expressive nuance, consistently avoid any sense of routine. In the two works with orchestra, he's blessed with unusually refined support; the woodwind, always prominent in Dvořák's orchestral writing, play with real character and Augustin Dumay, who has been one of Avanesyan's violin teachers, ensures that textures throughout the orchestra are finely balanced.

With all this to admire, I was surprised not to find the performances more involving. Maybe Avanesyan, who is still in his mid-twenties, has yet to acquire a fully commanding presence as a soloist but a particular problem, most acute in the Concerto's *Adagio*, the *Romance* and the third of the *Romantic Pieces* (where Dvořák's *appassionato* is undermined by frequent hesitations), is a lack of intensity in his *legato* playing. The notes follow one another more or less smoothly but there's little feeling of the phrases as passionate statements, formed of notes bound together by emotion and logic. The lively music – the Concerto's finale and the second of the *Romantic Pieces* (with Marianna Shirinyan providing a sparkling piano part) – fares much better and the elegiac final *Romantic Piece*, with its eloquent broken phrases (*legato* not an issue here), is beautifully played.

These interpretations are full of interest, then, but not altogether persuasive. For the Concerto, I'd rate Sarah Chang's 2001 account with Colin Davis and the LSO much higher; to Avanesyan's refinement she adds a deeper sense of conviction, as well as an extra edge of bravura.

Duncan Druce

*Vn Conc* – selected comparison:

S Chang, LSO, C Davis (8/03<sup>b</sup>) (EMI) 503415-2

## Gubaidulina

Seven Words<sup>a</sup>. In croce<sup>b</sup>. Kadenza. Et exspecto

Iñaki Alberdi *bayan* <sup>ab</sup>Asier Polo *vc*

<sup>a</sup>Basque National Orchestra / José Ramón Encinar  
Etcetera © KTC1433 (77' • DDD)



### Spanish performers in spiritual utterances from Gubaidulina

Sofia Gubaidulina's religious nature, specifically Russian Orthodox, finds expression in each of these pieces. Each also makes use of her much-loved bayan, the Russian button accordion played here with great virtuosity by Iñaki Alberdi. *Kadenza* is a solo *tour de force*; *Et exspecto*, based on the closing words of the Creed ('I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come') is an impressive five-movement sonata in which, the booklet-note tells us, the performer's interpretation goes, with her encouragement, well beyond the composer's notation.

In the other works, much is made of the combination of the accordion sounds and

Asier Polo's cello. With *In croce*, a number of cross-like ideas derive from the title – crossing of registers, crossing of lines and textures and so on – which are essentially private creative stimuli for the composer. But in the major work on the record, the half-hour *Seven Words*, the sentences spoken by Jesus on the cross are graphically, even fervently implied. Gubaidulina's love of short motifs, here often using very close intervals, produces in her hands music of strong and even painful intensity, seizing and gripping the attention, sometimes with fiercely punched chords on the accordion or with soaring harmonics on the cello that vanish into silence after the final Word. The longest movement is the central No 4, Jesus's cry, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?', a powerful and deeply affecting invention. This is a remarkable, compelling work.

John Warrack

## Hosokawa

'Landscapes'

Landscape V<sup>ab</sup>. Ceremonial Dance<sup>b</sup>.

Sakura für Otto Tomek<sup>a</sup>. Cloud and Light<sup>ab</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Mayui Miyata *shô*

<sup>b</sup>Munich Chamber Orchestra / Alexander Liebreich

ECM New Series © 476 3938 (56' • DDD)



### Hosokawa and the voice of Miyata's shô

Just as the shô, the mouth organ sharing roots with the Chinese sheng, morphed into its own distinctly Japanese identity, compositional traditions in Japan and China have also gone their separate ways. Unlike Chinese composers, who generally use a compositional vocabulary as a way of structuring their vernacular, Japanese composers further distil their already well-refined roots until the final product is stretched even further beyond recognition.

In other words, there's not much dance left in Toshio Hosokawa's *Ceremonial Dance* (2000), or much melodic landscape in his *Landscape V* (1993), originally written for shô and string quartet. In their place is a post-Darmstadt modernism where an essential timbral experimentalism – not unlike gagaku court music, actually – finds itself transformed into a minimalist palate of sonorities that, rather like calligraphy, expresses a wealth of emotional shadings in a single stroke.

For her part, shô soloist Mayumi Miyata takes a decidedly anti-virtuoso approach, shunning conventional measures of instrumental mastery in favour of almost pure tone and texture. This ends up setting the pace for the performances as a whole. Except for *Sakura für Otto Tomek* (2008), a solo piece allowing Miyata to spin a sonorous world on practically nothing but rich harmonic clusters alone, most of these performances thrive on the



exchange with conductor Alexander Liebreich. Leading the Munich Chamber Orchestra into a dialogue of sorts with the soloist, Liebreich essentially guides his musicians – particularly the strings – in sounding as much like the shō as one would ever imagine.

Ken Smith

## Liszt • Tchaikovsky

**Liszt** Totentanz, S126<sup>a</sup>. Années de pèlerinage, année 2, Italie, S161 – Three Petrarch Sonnets

**Tchaikovsky** Piano Concerto No 1, Op 23<sup>b</sup>

**Sergio Tiempo** *pf*<sup>ab</sup> Svizzera Italiana Orchestra /

<sup>a</sup>Ion Marin, <sup>b</sup>Alexandre Rabinovitch-Barakovsky

Avanti Classic (E) AVANTI110382 (66' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live at the Palazzo dei Congressi, Lugano,

<sup>a</sup>June 2004, <sup>b</sup>June 2005



### A return to recording for Venezuelan virtuoso Tiempo

Sergio Tiempo (formerly Sergio Daniel Tiempo) is a Venezuelan pianist with such an overflowing cornucopia of gifts that it is astonishing that no major record company (a brief spell at EMI notwithstanding) has seized the opportunity. True, Japanese Victor issued three CDs in the 1980s, discs that at once suggested a dazzling if immature musician, but after that there was an unaccountable gap. Now on Avanti Classic, Tiempo returns in two live performances taken from Martha Argerich's Lugano Festival and a studio recording of Liszt's Three Petrarch Sonnets.

And here, in both Liszt's *Totentanz* and Tchaikovsky's First Concerto, he more than fulfils his early and extraordinary promise. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that he may well be the most dazzling and spontaneous pianist of his generation. At every point he turns up the heat to near boiling point, joyfully and unapologetically flaunting his virtuoso bird-of-paradise feathers. His octave technique is superhuman: try the famous cannonade of octaves in the first movement of the Tchaikovsky, where the near palpable influence of Argerich, his longtime mentor, shows. He may be less taut in the *Totentanz* than, say, Brendel or Zimerman but he makes it impossible to resist such coltish brio, colour and imagination. Every bar sparks with a fearless, vivid and audacious life, and no other recent version of the Tchaikovsky comes within distance of this.

Tiempo's endless pianistic resource is no less evident in Liszt's Petrarch Sonnets, their florid emotional life ('I fear, I hope, I burn, I freeze again' or, more contemplatively, 'I saw on earth angelic grace') ideally suited to such volatility and imagination. Well recorded and accompanied, with the pianist's own playful and perceptive essay, this is a record in a thousand.

Bryce Morrison

## Liszt • Wagner

**Liszt** A Faust Symphony<sup>a</sup> **Wagner** A Faust Overture

<sup>a</sup>Endrik Wottrich *ten*<sup>a</sup> Chorus of the Saxon

State Opera, Dresden; Staatskapelle Dresden /

Christian Thielemann

Video director Tilo Krause

C Major Entertainment (E) DVD 707708;

(E) 707804 (90' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •

DTS-HD MA, DTS 5.1 & PCM stereo • o • s)

Recorded live at the Semperoper, Dresden,

February 2011



### Thielemann's Faust-themed concert from the Semperoper

It was a good move to mark the bicentenary of Liszt's birth with a performance of what is surely his finest orchestral work, *A Faust Symphony*. Appropriate too to have it played in a city that was significant for both Liszt and his son-in-law Wagner, and conducted by the Staatskapelle's new maestro, who evidently has the work's narrative course running through his blood. For evidence listen to Thielemann's forceful and atmospheric account of the Faust portrait of the first movement. Much of the playing is superb; but although it's good to have the *Faust Symphony* available on screen, various sound-only (CD) options suggest themselves for comparison. One recording that I'm particularly fond of, also with the Staatskapelle Dresden as it happens, harks back to April 1995, where the conductor was Giuseppe Sinopoli (DG, 7/96). Interesting points of comparative reference are at the start of 'Gretchen', where Sinopoli brings greater clarity to the musical sentences, and the singing cello line at around 9'31" where, although Thielemann's players are eloquent, Sinopoli draws shapelier contours. In 'Mephistopheles', Thielemann isn't quite the devil that Sinopoli managed to be (not to mention parallel characterisations by Beecham, Iván Fischer and on the two Bernstein recordings). Thielemann's principal virtues are purity, energy and the ability to hold together what can prove an unwieldy structure.

Wagner's thrilling *Faust Overture*, originally conceived as part of a projected symphony, is played with warmth and vigour. Indeed, one of the principal virtues of this production is the warmth of the Semperoper acoustic and a recording that is fully on a par with the finest SACDs. Camerawork is mostly expert and unobtrusive (first-rate picture quality) and Thielemann is good to watch, his beat always clear, his gestures impassioned and precise. The various orchestra sections are well represented although, as is nearly always in the case with films of concerts, the lens doesn't always fall on desks (or players) that you're listening out for. So, while hardly a replacement for the best *Faust Symphonies* on CD, this is without doubt a useful supplement to them. Rob Cowan

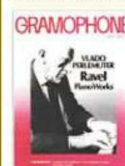
## GRAMOPHONE Archive

July 1980:

### Suk's Dvořák Concerto

Our review of an account of Dvořák's Violin Concerto by Josef Suk, the Czech violinist who died last year

## Dvořák



Violin Concerto, Op 53 B108;

Romance, Op 11 B39

Josef Suk *vn*

Czech Philharmonic Orchestra / Václav Neumann

Supraphon • 1410 2423 (E3-75)

Selected comparison:

Perlman, LSO, Barenboim (10/75) (HMV) ASO3120

Both Itzhak Perlman's performance of the Concerto on HMV and this new recording from Josef Suk contain much to enjoy, but the sound of the Czech Philharmonic's *tutti*, especially in the first movement, seems more appropriate to Dvořák's style. Partly this is due to a certain alacrity with the semiquavers, yet under Neumann the textures appear more sensitively balanced, as between woodwind and strings in the passage that leads up to the soloist's second re-entry at bar 55. The sound on the HMV disc is possibly warmer, but certain orchestral details are clearer on Supraphon and in the *Adagio* one is more conscious of solo flute and horn phrases behind the violin. Even so, the earlier recording obtains an excellent balance between the soloist and wind in the *quasi moderato* passage that links the first two movements.

Suk, who has recorded the Concerto before (Supraphon, 5/62<sup>b</sup>), sounds more natural than Perlman in the opening *Allegro* and one receives the strong impression that he has lived with it longer. Perlman, splendid violinist though he is, makes some of the bravura passages sound awkwardly written for the instrument, a good instance being the double- and treble-stopping of the cadenza-like passage that begins at bar 224 and which Suk handles more smoothly. This is not true of the graceful single-line filigree of the slow movement, where it is hard indeed to choose between them, or of the finale. In the latter, HMV's recording has perhaps more presence, whereas Suk, at a few points, sounds too forward. Both play superbly, however.

The early Romance has an atmosphere very much of Bohemia's woods and fields, and is almost a tone-poem for violin and orchestra. This aspect is best revealed by Perlman's interpretation; Suk's is done more overtly as a solo vehicle, though each violinist maintains great purity of tone.

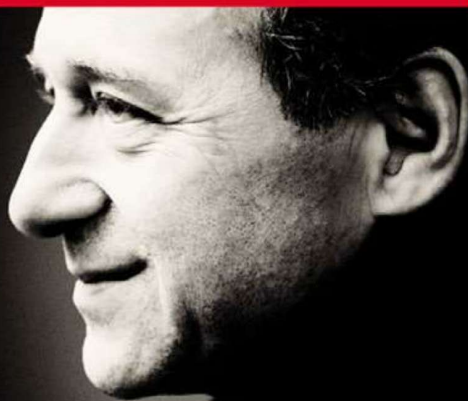
Max Harrison

July 1980

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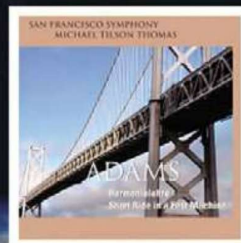
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JOHN ADAMS PHOTO BY CHRISTINE ALICINO



## Lutosławski

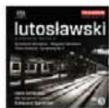
'Orchestral Works, Vol 2'

Symphonic Variations. Piano Concerto<sup>a</sup>. Variations on a Theme of Paganini<sup>a</sup>. Symphony No 4

<sup>a</sup>Louis Lortie *pf*

BBC Symphony Orchestra / Edward Gardner

Chandos (P) CHSA5098 (67' • DDD/DSD)



**Volume 2 but the third disc in Gardner's Lutosławski series**

The third volume in Chandos's welcome Lutosławski series brings a second helping of purely orchestral fare in a programme spanning the Polish master's entire career. Proceedings are launched in irrepressible fashion with the Symphonic Variations that the budding 25-year-old composer finished in 1938 while still a student at the Warsaw Conservatory. His teacher, Witold Maliszewski, was scathing ('For me your work is ugly'); however, in a performance as vivacious and committed as this one, it comprises a veritable treat, for the music is personable, resourceful and witty, and scored with colourful assurance to boot.

Three years later, Lutosławski completed his *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, a dazzlingly inventive showpiece for two pianos; this arrangement for piano and orchestra was written in 1978 at the behest of Felicia Blumental (who went on to give the premiere in Miami the following year). Louis Lortie makes quite a splash with it and is no less scrupulously appreciative of those dependable virtues (among them elegance of form, generous lyricism and tumbling fantasy) that distinguish the strongly communicative Piano Concerto that Lutosławski fashioned for Krystian Zimerman in 1987-88. Plaudits, too, for Gardner's conception of the riveting Fourth Symphony (1988-92), which has both infectious involvement and considerable expressive ardour to commend it, if not quite the supreme composure and cumulative power of Salonen's unerringly paced pioneering account with the LAPO.

Throughout, Gardner secures some first-class playing from the BBC SO; Ralph Couzens's engineering is, needless to say, state-of-the-art. Cordially recommended – and next up, I gather, is a coupling of solo the Cello Concerto (with Paul Watkins as soloist) and Second Symphony. **Andrew Achenbach**

*Sym No 4 – selected comparison:*

LAPO, Salonen (11/94\*) (SONY) SBK90480

## Mahler

Symphony No 2, 'Resurrection'

Kathleen Battle *sop* Christa Ludwig *mez*

Vienna State Opera Concert Choir;

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra / James Levine

Orfeo (E) C837 112B (89' • ADD)

Recorded live at the Salzburg Festival, August 1989

## Mahler

Symphony No 2, 'Resurrection'

Michaela Kaune *sop* Dagmar Pecková *contr*

NDR Choir; Latvian State Chorus; Hamburg

Philharmonic Orchestra / Simone Young

Oehms Classics (E) OC412 (79' • DDD)



**Resurrections old and new from Salzburg and Hamburg**

The revelation of Vladimir Jurowski's live London Philharmonic account from last year has made it difficult, if not impossible, to listen objectively to performances which fail to scale the heights of this monumental work but rather sit comfortably in the foothills. Neither of these performances can hold a candle to the Jurowski, or Iván Fischer, or indeed any of the more inspirational accounts of recent years. In Mahler it's a case of 'who dares wins', and Levine and Young are not in the business of daring.

Levine's 1989 Salzburg account would seem to have been fashioned with the delicate sensibilities of the glamorous festival audience in mind. It's a reading which dutifully pushes most of the right buttons but never the music's extremes. Everything is kept on a pretty even keel as the regal Vienna Philharmonic process from one brassy climax to the next. Mahler's seismic extremes of tempo are largely ignored, the great development climax of the first movement grinding to its *molto pesante* moment of truth long before the marking actually appears in the score (indeed, Mahler demands quite the opposite – a reckless dash to the abyss). It's almost as if Levine has examined the finer points of the score and thought better of them: too awkward and/or challenging.

Of course, the Vienna strings offer an *echt* Viennese account of the second-movement *Andante* and you can feel the sense of 'well-being' in the Grosses Festspielhaus as the musical language fleetingly alludes to the New Year's Day concert in Vienna. What is missing here is any real sense of the music's threatening undercurrents. Likewise the third movement, where a well-manicured cosiness prevails. The great Christa Ludwig was sadly past her considerable best when this recording was made and, while the brilliant trumpet- and horn-led paeans of the finale make for some sporadic thrills, the whole edifice eventually lumbers towards a grand and portentous peroration, growing impossibly slow in the orchestral coda.

Simone Young also goes for the heavy sombre option in the moment of 'Resurrection' (and I hate to admit it but so did Bernstein – though he, of course, carried the fervour of belief to dramatic extremes). The point is that the Resurrection Hymn needs to engender

uplift in its phrasing and until I had heard Jurowski in these closing pages I simply hadn't realised how ecstatic and songful they could sound. My goodness, Mahler would have been blown away.

There is nothing remotely ecstatic about Young's approach but rather it is the culmination of a dogged and nondescript account of the piece, which starts as it means to go on with a sluggish and singularly unarresting articulation of the first movement's opening bars. The lack of interest and impact throughout this auspicious movement has rather less to do with speeds than spirit, though she, too, succeeds in ironing out many of Mahler's precipitous shocks.

There is, however, one moment of magic in the performance. In the 'Urlicht' – nobly enhanced by Dagmar Pecková's deep contralto timbre – Young (as directed by Mahler but rarely practised) separates and distances the trumpets at the start as if we've suddenly entered another realm. But then again, so does Jurowski – one of numerous revelations which make his the version to hear and hear again.

**Edward Seckerson**

*Selected comparisons:*

Budapest Fest Orch, I Fischer (A/07) (CHNN) CCSSA23506

LPO, Jurowski (8/11) (LPO) LPO0054

## Mahler

Symphony No 5

New Philharmonic Orchestra, Westphalia /

Heiko Mathias Förster

Solo Musica (E) SM160 (71' • DDD)



**A studio Fifth from the young Westphalian orchestra**

Another day, another Fifth – and there's the rub. That a 'provincial' German orchestra of only 14 years' standing should be playing the work at all would have struck an earlier generation of Mahlerians as wholly remarkable. Even today, were the end result being offered at bargain price it might be thought worth considering. Under its previous chief, Johannes Wildner, the band did indeed record for Naxos. Sold at premium price, the present production seems likelier to appeal to (and is perhaps intended to address) a primarily local audience. Heiko Mathias Förster, a talent worth watching, goes for unforced clarity rather than the *nth* degree of excitement and perhaps it won't matter to you that his fresh, spacious and airy interpretation lacks grit. Typically the *Adagietto* is unfashionably slow without being in the least over-egged. If anything the reverse is true. The studio-made recording is truthful, the occasional mid-range blare presumably a faithful reflection of the sound produced by a conscientiously drilled and enthusiastic ensemble. Don't let me put you off but, objectively speaking, the team's previous release



of Mahler's First Symphony has more going for it – the inclusion of the discarded 'Blumine' movement and SACD encoding, inexplicably dropped here. The Fifth's designer booklet contains a generous quota of photographs; the text would appear to have lost something in translation. **David Gutman**

## Nielsen

Symphonies – No 1, Op 7<sup>a</sup>; No 6, 'Sinfonia semplice'<sup>b</sup>  
**London Symphony Orchestra / Sir Colin Davis**  
 LSO Live (M) LSO0715 (68' • DDD/DSD)  
 Recorded live at the Barbican, London, <sup>b</sup>May & June and <sup>a</sup>October 2011



### Nielsen's first and last for the LSO cycle's mid-point

More fiery and dramatic Nielsen from Sir Colin Davis and the LSO in the second instalment of their cycle of the symphonies. Their directness and verve recall nothing so much as the orchestra's previous cycle with Ole Schmidt back in the 1970s but with greatly superior playing (apart from the orchestra's unfamiliarity with much of the music, the earlier recording sessions were bedevilled by power strikes).

The First Symphony here is beautifully paced, balancing drive with poetry. The slow movement may be on the broad side but, buoyed up by such musicianship and affection, it can take it. True, the heavy brass and timpani loom rather large in *fortissimo tutti* passages, which affects parts of both *scherzo* and finale. But that is the only reason I would hesitate to rank the performance alongside the very best.

If Davis's affinity for Berlioz pays dividends in the First Symphony, with the *Sinfonia semplice* it is his Stravinskian credentials that stand him in good stead (there are even anticipations of his beloved Tippett in places). In the great first movement the LSO strings seize on the fearsome counterpart with fantastic relish, and Davis has his finger on the psychological as well as the rhythmic pulse. More controversial is his treatment of the 'Humoreske', which is so measured as to lose much of its edge. Perhaps Davis's point is to bring out a subtext of lethargy and ennui. Several hearings have not convinced me, however, and the blurring of the contrast with the succeeding 'Proposta seria' – itself a little tentative, though with some subtly atmospheric touches – seems to me a high price to pay. Nor does the finale quite have the swing of a fully seasoned account. With Blomstedt's readings an outrageous online bargain these days, the recommendation for his classic versions stands.

**David Fanning**

*Selected comparisons –*

*San Francisco SO, Blomstedt*

(2/90<sup>a</sup>) (DECC) 460 985-2DF2 & 460 988-2DF2

LSO, Schmidt (REGI) RRC2046

## Ruders

Symphony No 4, 'An Organ Symphony'<sup>a</sup>. Trio  
 transcendentale<sup>b</sup>. Songs and Rhapsodies<sup>c</sup>  
<sup>a</sup>Flemming Dreisig, <sup>b</sup>Nicholas Wearne orgs <sup>c</sup>Frode  
 Andersen acco <sup>c</sup>Athelas Sinfonietta Copenhagen;  
<sup>a</sup>Odense Symphony Orchestra / Roberto Minczuk  
 Bridge (P) BRIDGE9375 (61' • DDD)



### Organ theme for Volume 7 of Bridge's Ruders traversal

Ruders's Fourth is an organ symphony in name and also in fact. It is certainly not a concerto – the organ-writing is resolutely unflashy, being fully integrated into the texture, at times mimicking the orchestra or being mimicked by it, at other times throwing rhythmic challenges in its face. The movements are a hazily mysterious 'Prelude', a Gothic-horror 'Cortège' and a scurrying 'Etude', all of which end abruptly, allowing a mighty concluding 'Chaconne' to gather the threads. Only the quizzical concluding gesture bothers me a little, as it did at the UK premiere performance in Birmingham. Unsurprisingly, too, I couldn't find a playback level at which the recording gave me anything like the perspectives of Symphony Hall; and this is a piece that thrives on the spatial dimension. But that is to take nothing away from the obvious dedication and skill of the Odense performance.

The symphony is from 2008 and two even more recent pieces complete the disc. The four-and-a-half-minute *Trio transcendentale* was a test piece for the 2011 International Carl Nielsen Organ Competition, at which Nicholas Wearne gave what was judged (surely deservedly) the winning interpretation. The piece gradually works its way from what the composer calls 'popcorn Baroque' to near-atonal 'madness', a process handled with as much virtuosity as the instrumental writing itself (as a trained organist, Ruders's command of idiom both here and in the symphony is total).

*Songs and Rhapsodies*, consisting of 12 short linked movements for accordion and wind quintet, once again explores the relationship between diverse timbres with energy, imagination and inventiveness. Admittedly without the benefit of a score, the performance sounds to me conspicuously confident and precise, which may well also be a tribute to Ruders's craftsmanship. At any rate, I do not expect to come across another disc of contemporary music as richly rewarding as this one in a hurry.

**David Fanning**

## Shostakovich

Cello Concertos – No 1, Op 107; No 2, Op 126  
**Enrico Dindo** vc **Danish National Symphony**  
**Orchestra / Gianandrea Noseda**  
 Chandos (P) CHSA5093 (60' • DDD/DSD)



### 1997 Rostropovich laureate in both Shostakovich concertos

Though Mstislav Rostropovich may still rule the roost in 'his' concertos, none of his recordings can boast modern sound, let alone SACD encoding. Enrico Dindo, a student of Antonio Janigro who was for many years principal cellist at La Scala, won acclaim as 'a cellist of exceptional qualities' with 'a splendid Italian voice' when he took First Prize at the Rostropovich Competition in Paris in 1997. The present Chandos/Danish Radio co-production places that voice in a typically spacious acoustic but technical fallibility can mar its projection of bravura passages and all is not quite as it should be elsewhere.

In the ubiquitous First Concerto the decision to opt for a fast, nimble opening is daring – I don't recall a racier tempo. For me at least the stunt proves self-defeating, the music's emotional burden undersold. Worse, the Danish woodwind sound distinctly unsettled. Did Noseda ask his players for a bald, Soviet-style sonority? If so, the effect too often registers as poor tuning. Lyrical passages are more sensitively handled, the finale again notably propulsive. The tendency for this music to degenerate into *moto perpetuo* insectile buzz is unfortunately not resisted here.

Competition is fierce indeed. Heinrich Schiff is a safer bet if you are looking for an assured speed merchant in No 1, while his pupil, Daniel Müller-Schott, is appreciably more spacious and exceptionally well accompanied in the still elusive Second Concerto. There's less to query in Enrico Dindo's tauter reading of that work, yet inevitably his music-making pales beside the power, eloquence and sheer wildness of Rostropovich's early live accounts. Once you've lived with the staggering Shostakovich officially unveiled in the set devoted to the cellist's 'Russian Years' (EMI, 5/97) and now somewhat misleadingly subsumed in a box entitled 'The Complete EMI Recordings', it is difficult to settle for anything less. **David Gutman**

*Selected comparisons – coupled as above:*

Schiff, *Bavarian Rad SO, M Shostakovich*

(8/85<sup>a</sup>) (PHIL) 475 7575POR

Müller-Schott, *Bavarian Rad SO, Kreisberg*

(10/08) (ORFE) C659 081A

## Sibelius

Symphonies – No 2, Op 43; No 5, Op 82  
**Minnesota Orchestra / Osmo Vänskä**  
 BIS (P) BIS-SACD1986 (78' • DDD/DSD)



### Vänskä's American Sibelius cycle begins

Osmo Vänskä's revelatory first Sibelius symphony cycle, made with the Lahti Symphony Orchestra in the 1990s (reissued





Enrico Dindo and the Danish National Symphony Orchestra recording Shostakovich

last year) formed the cornerstone of his international reputation. The 'finest survey of the past three decades' I hailed it last year. A decade and a half on, Vänskä has revisited the music with his new orchestra in Minnesota, and his interpretations have moved on.

So how do Nos 2 and 5 compare with their Lahti equivalents? They are every bit as compelling and intelligently realised. This time around in No 2 tempi are more flexible, for instance the heavier reining-in midway through the opening *Allegretto*, the very sedate start of the *Tempo andante, ma rubato* second span (two minutes slower as a whole in Minnesota but still teeming with drama), or the passage after 4'00" in the finale. The peroration is taken a touch too slowly for my liking (although the movement in total is now slightly swifter), just missing the incandescence achieved last time (and, indeed, by Järvi before him). Overall, I find the Lahti version's flow more convincing but Minnesota's has the added bonus of superlative sound and much rethought detail. No 5 has these same plus points and is a tad quicker now than 15 years ago. If anything, Vänskä handles the opening movement's compound structure even better than before and the finale is just right, with irresistible forward momentum outstripping even Järvi.

Thore Brinkmann's superb sound reproduces with exceptional clarity every nuance of a finely balanced orchestral picture in a spacious acoustic (try the opening bars of the Fifth). Altogether, a fine start to what may be the benchmark cycle for the 21st century.

Oh, and the notes by one Robert Layton aren't bad either! **Guy Rickards**

*Selected comparisons – coupled as above:*

*Lahti SO, Vänskä (10/11<sup>th</sup>) (BIS) BIS-CD1933/5*

*Sym No 2 – selected comparison:*

*Gothenburg PO, N Järvi (10/84) (BIS) BIS-CD252*

*Sym No 5 – selected comparison:*

*Gothenburg PO, N Järvi (6/83; 10/84) (BIS) BIS-CD222*

## Tchaikovsky • Shostakovich



**Shostakovich Festive Overture, Op 96**

**Tchaikovsky Symphony No 5, Op 64**

**Toulouse Capitole Orchestra / Tugan Sokhiev**

Naïve Ⓢ V5252 (52' • DDD)



### Sokhiev moves on to the Fifth with his Toulouse orchestra

One of the more striking of the slew of Tchaikovsky symphony performances over the last few years came from this young Ossetian conductor in a reading of the Fourth

Symphony which ideally married classicism and precision to temperament (1/07). So it is again with this account of the Fifth. How refreshing in a work of such familiarity to find oneself unable to take a single bar for granted. Don't get me wrong, this isn't the kind of performance which draws attention to itself, which somehow courts individuality, but rather one which re-evaluates how phrasing relates to sound in pursuit of the greatest spontaneity.

If you take the second subject group of the first movement, Tchaikovsky's rustic country dance (woodwinds) turns to rosy reverie not through wilfully obvious rubato such as we so often find in readings of this passage but rather through the most subtle and meaningful shaping of the transforming melody in the strings. And speaking of transformation, how poetically and expectantly those somnolent chord progressions at the start of the slow movement prepare the way for the great horn solo.

This is a performance which sounds composed in the playing of it, which feels organic, and which probably owes a lot to the tutorage of the great Ilya Musin, who nurtured Sokhiev's talent. There is a singing quality to all the playing – the third-movement waltz, for instance, is fleet and fluent, even a little febrile,





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and doesn't for once sound like a 'diversion' from the drama of the whole but rather an integral part of it. And the finale grandstands with aplomb, such details as the solo clarinet's wild arabesques at one point vaulting from the texture with some, it has to be said, audible assistance from the engineers.

Shostakovich's *Festive Overture* behaves very much like an encore, going off like a rocket with cracking string-playing and an olympic blaze of fanfares at the close. I now eagerly await Sokhiev's *Patbétique*.

Edward Seckerson

## Van der Aa

Up-Close

Sol Gabetta *vc*

Amsterdam Sinfonietta / Candida Thompson

Disquiet Media © DVD DQM04 (31' • PAL • 16:9 •

DTS 5.1 & PCM stereo • 0)

Recorded live, March 2011



**Multimedia concerto Up-Close  
off tour and now on DVD**

Michel van der Aa's enterprising synthesis of sound and vision continues with a work which transcends its hybrid nature in audacious fashion. Performed around western Europe (including London's Barbican Hall), *Up-Close* (2010) emphasises equally his abilities as film-maker, engineer and composer. It might ostensibly be thought a cello concerto: the combative first movement prefaced by a solo introduction and the energetic finale followed by an evocative postlude, with the fugitive slow movement framed by interludes where Van der Aa's trademark laptop electronics are to the fore. Yet this half-hour piece is inextricably linked to a film which enters into the interior psyche of the woman on screen, with objects common to both constituting the link between two parallel worlds. It is the way these worlds constantly alternate on the way to their climactic superimposition which turns an outwardly abstruse conception into an engrossing and unsettling experience.

In the securing of which cellist Sol Gabetta has the crucial role – moving as she does with enviable dexterity between platform and film-screen, though without any impairing of either her commitment or musicianship in what is a fluent and dynamic account of an imaginative score. Nor should the contribution of the Amsterdam Sinfonietta be underestimated, its playing as secure as might be expected from an ensemble which has several excellent releases (on Channel Classics) to its name. Both recording and presentation are fully on a par with earlier issues on Van der Aa's own Disquiet label, of which *Up-Close* is undoubtedly the most impressive yet. **Richard Whitehouse**

## Vivaldi

L'estro armonico, Op 3<sup>a</sup> – Concertos No 3, RV310;

No 9, RV230. Concertos – RV93<sup>a</sup>; RV540<sup>b</sup>.

Trio Sonatas<sup>c</sup> – RV82; RV85. *Andromeda liberata* –

'Sovvente il sole'<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Tuva Semmingsen *mez*

<sup>c</sup>János Rolla *vn*

<sup>b</sup>Norbert Blume *va d'amore*

<sup>abc</sup>Peter Howard Jensen *gtr*

Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra

DG © 275 4278 (67' • DDD)



**Rolla and Blume revisit  
Vivaldi with Jensen on guitar**

It's striking just how vividly Vivaldi's instrumentation – which dictates harmonic voicing and texture and melodic shape and compass – reads against variants of the ritornello form much favoured by the composer. Nevertheless, preserving original instrumentation for the sake of an often spurious authenticity is less important than clearly expressing the underlying musical logic, preferably with due deference to both historical and contemporary performing conventions.

It's been just over 20 years since violinist and conductor János Rolla, violist Norbert Blume and the Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra joined guitarist John Williams for the Sony recording titled 'John Williams Plays Vivaldi Concertos'. Now they revisit many of the same works, this time with Danish-born classical guitarist Peter Howard Jensen replacing Williams. The earlier recording is a hard act to follow: Williams's playing is buoyant and incisive while the orchestra's sound is appropriately transparent; a bonus is the inclusion of the Concerto for two mandolins, RV532, performed on two guitars by Williams and Benjamin Verdery.

But Jensen, who in concert also enjoys performing guitar transcriptions of the works of Bach, Haydn and Schubert, has an immaculate technique allied with a full tone and brings to Vivaldi not only a restrained sense of drama but a sophisticated understanding of the tonal possibilities of the guitar in Baroque repertoire. This is apparent not only in the solo concertos, originally written for violin, but in the trios with Rolla, whose direction throughout is masterful and astute, and the D minor Concerto for viola d'amore and lute with the excellent Blume.

And the bonus here? A gorgeous rendition by mezzo Tuva Semmingsen of 'Sovvente il sole' from Vivaldi's serenata *Andromeda liberata*.

**William Yeoman**

*Selected comparison:*

*Williams, Franz Liszt CO (SONY) SK46556*

## 'Danças Brasileiras'

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(arr Pereira) Jobim A Chegada dos Candangos

Krieger Passacalha para o Novo Milênio Levy Suite

brésilienne – Samba Lorenzo Fernández Suite,

'Reisado do pastoreio' – Batuque Mignone

Congada Nepomuceno Garatuja – Preludio. Serie

brasileira – Batuque Villa-Lobos Dança frenética

São Paulo Symphony Orchestra / Roberto Minczuk

BIS © BIS-SACD1430 (59' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded 2003



**South American potpourri  
from former Brazilian SO boss**

Those aware of the international orchestral protests surrounding conductor Roberto Minczuk might be surprised at seeing a new release from his baton (admittedly not featuring the Brazilian Symphony Orchestra, the subject of the storm and the artistic direction of which he has now relinquished), until one realises that this delightful programme was set down in 2003.

The quality is first-rate, a tribute to the musical and expressive gains Minczuk can achieve when an orchestra is with him.

The programme is a who's who of early-20th-century Brazilian composers. Villa-Lobos and Camargo Guarnieri are the most familiar, represented by characteristic inspirations vividly realised, in the case of *Dança frenética* even more than by Duarte. Mignone's vivacious *Congada* featured on last year's 'Fiesta criolla' from Chandos; honours are even.

Oscar Lorenzo Fernández's *Batuque* was put on the map by Bernstein, no less, whose account remains unsurpassed, although Minczuk's is a formidable challenger – what a shame the whole suite is not featured. That regret applies to the rather sedate *Batuque* by Alberto Nepomuceno and Alexandre Levy's overlong *Samba* as well, both finales to larger works, albeit lighter in tone than Lorenzo Fernández's. Nepomuceno's prelude to his unfinished opera *Garatuja* is a most effective curtain-raiser.

The real find of the disc for me was Edino Krieger's *Passacalha para o Novo Milênio*, a finely crafted score that slows the pace of the disc down nicely before the final pair of works by Jobim and Guerra-Peixe (the latter played here with considerably more panache than by the Orquestra da Camara Rio on Biscoito Fino). With splendid SACD sound from BIS, this is a winning and hugely entertaining disc. Enjoy! **Guy Rickards**

*Guerra-Peixe – comparative version:*

*Rio CO (BISC) BP573*

*Lorenzo Fernández – comparative version:*

*NYPO, Bernstein (9/64<sup>th</sup>; 4/69<sup>th</sup>) (SONY) SMK47544*

*Mignone – comparative version:*

*Württemberg PO Reutlingen, Castagna*

*(11/11) (CHAN) CHAN10675*

*Villa-Lobos – comparative version:*

*Slovak PO, Duarte (3/92) (MARC) 8 223552*



# Chamber



## Stephen Plaistow reviews chamber music by Morgan Hayes:

*'Expect spontaneity and an impression that the gestural activity has been born out of improvisation'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 57**



## Philip Clark on archive reissues from the Juilliard Quartet:

*'Inchoate material that collapses in on itself, punctuating pizzicatos scarring the flow like timpani hits'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 61**

## Beethoven

String Quintets - Op 4; Op 29

Barbara Buntrock *va* Leipzig Quartet

Dabringhaus und Grimm © MDG307 1715-2

(68' • DDD)



### MDG's house quartet joined by Buntrock for Beethoven à 5

Scholar Marion M Scott described Op 29 as 'a very beautiful work – beautiful both from its themes and the exquisite art with which the music and its medium are identified'. The Leipzig ensemble weighs in on the aestheticism thus described, the opening movement expansively delineated. The second subject has a relaxed ease but contrasts are not overly stressed. Largeness of design seems to appeal more than thrust and parry, though this aspect of the music is not neglected in the *Scherzo*, and is very much to the fore in the finale, where a taut *Presto* vies with two interludes in A major and C major, each marked *Andante con moto e scherzo*. These artists acknowledge the changes in mood, as indeed they do in the tenderly enunciated slow movement, *Adagio molto espressivo*. Overall, this interpretation complements the more dramatic view of the work by The Lindsays with Louise Williams.

Four years after writing the Wind Octet in E flat (posthumously numbered Op 103), Beethoven arranged it as Op 4. Though he had radically rethought the work, echoes of its original timbres and character – a serenade – remain. Wisely, the musicians don't try to disguise them; or underplay the larger scale of the revision. Instead, they tread a fine line to recreate Beethoven's expanded intentions. Pity the Fugue in D for string quintet (1817) wasn't included too. Good sound and balance but missing the airy transparency of SACD, a system that lamentably MDG appears not to have used here. **Nalen Anthoni**

Op 29 – selected comparison:

Williams, Lindsay Qt (ASV) CDDCA1113

## Debussy • Franck • Poulenc



Debussy Cello Sonata Franck Violin Sonata

(arr Delsart) Poulenc Cello Sonata

Anne Gastinel *vc* Claire Désert *pf*

Naïve © V5259 (61' • DDD)



### Gastinel's 1690 Testore in sonatas for violin and cello

César Franck's Violin Sonata drops from the soprano and alto register to the tenor and bass-baritone in this performance by Anne Gastinel and Claire Désert, done in the cello arrangement by Jules Delsart. The vocal analogy is apt, because one of the notable aspects of the playing is its singing quality, the expressiveness that Gastinel draws from fine nuances of sound all seamlessly knit together in mellifluous lines. Shifting the music down an octave (or, at times, two) enhances the mellow timbre of the first movement, the third-movement 'Recitativo-fantasia' and the moments of repose in the finale.

Gastinel's cello, described in sensual, almost Mills & Boon terms in a booklet-note, is a 1690 Testore, its rich, mature, burgundy tone ideally suited to Franck's softer textures. Yet it can also open out gloriously in dramatic episodes, never overreaching itself but encompassing the emotional and physical contours of the music to dynamic effect. In her interpretative stance and application of colour Gastinel is ideally matched by Désert; the recorded balance is judicious and there is a real sense of a performance being created in complete accord. The same is true of Debussy's Sonata, eloquently voiced and structured by Gastinel and Désert so that its surprises register. The *pizzicatos* and *piano staccatos* of the 'Sérénade', for example, are executed with whimsical panache, while the span of the sonata is achieved with organic cohesiveness. Poulenc's Sonata adds to the variety of a programme that is played with both passion and discretion.

**Geoffrey Norris**

## Enescu

Suite No 2, Op 20 – Pavane<sup>1</sup>. Impromptu concertant<sup>cf</sup>. Ballade<sup>cf</sup>. Konzertstück<sup>df</sup>. Cantabile et Presto<sup>df</sup>. Nocturne et Saltarello<sup>ef</sup>. Pastorale, Menuet triste et Nocturne<sup>cf</sup>. Légende<sup>bf</sup>. Aubade<sup>cde</sup>.

Sérénade lointaine<sup>cef</sup>. Tarantelle<sup>cf</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Vincent Lucas *f* <sup>b</sup>Frédéric Mellardi *tp* <sup>c</sup>Tatiana

Samouil *vn* <sup>d</sup>Gérard Causse *va* <sup>e</sup>Justus Grimm *vc*

<sup>f</sup>Claudia Bara, <sup>g</sup>Carmen-Elena Rotaru *pf*

Indésens © INDE036 (76' • DDD)



### Maturing Enescu at a century's dusk and another's dawn

Few of Enescu's smaller works are repertoire items outside his native Romania. It's often forgotten that he was a celebrated violin virtuoso (Menuhin was a pupil) and wrote a number of beautifully crafted and challenging pieces in the decades either side of 1900. This new recording collects many of these to provide a fine portrait of a composer still evolving to full maturity.

The music's expressive range is broad, from the intimate (eg the 'Pavane' from the Second Piano Suite – no room, alas, for the whole work – and *Ballade*) to the dramatic (the *Konzertstück* and *Légende*) to the charming (*Cantabile* and *Presto* of 1904) and exuberant (the *Saltarello* and 1895 *Tarantelle*). Enescu's instrumental knowledge informed much of his solo writing, especially for the works for strings which form the majority here. Most of the programme consists of duos but three ensemble miniatures feature: the pretty if slightly flimsy *Aubade* for string trio (1899) and *Pastorale*, *Menuet triste et Nocturne* for violin and piano duet (1900), as well as the fine *Sérénade lointaine* for piano trio (1903).

The performances are warm and sympathetic throughout, underpinned by Claudia Bara's sensitive playing (she is preparing a recital of Enescu piano works for EMI, I gather). In the 'Pavane' she is a match for Borac (Avie, 11/03) although appreciably slower; pace is leisurely, too, in the *Légende* (1906) compared to, say, Hardenberger and Andsnes (EMI, A/99). The instrumental soloists all acquit themselves with aplomb, not least cellist Justus Grimm and flautist Vincent Lucas, although the performance I admired most was Gérard Causse's of the viola *Konzertstück* (1906). Nicely balanced, warm sound in a natural acoustic. **Guy Rickards**

## Fauré



Cello Sonatas – No 1, Op 109 (incl alternative finale); No 2, Op 117. *Élégie*, Op 24. *Romance*, Op 69.

*Papillon*, Op 77. *Sérénade*, Op 98. *Sicilienne*, Op 78

Alban Gerhardt *vc* Cecile Licad *pf*

Hyperion © CDA67872 (64' • DDD)



## Fauré

Cello Sonatas – No 1, Op 109; No 2, Op 117. *Elégie*, Op 24. *Romance*, Op 69. *Papillon*, Op 77. *Sérénade*, Op 98. *Berceuse*, Op 16. Piano Trio, Op 120<sup>a</sup>

François Salque vc Eric Le Sage pf with <sup>a</sup>Paul Meyer cl  
Alpha © ALPHA600 (74' • DDD)



### Gerhardt and Salque immersed in Fauré's language of renewal

Received ideas about Fauré's two cello sonatas would have us regard them as characteristic of his old age when his manner tended to sobriety – asceticism even – compared to the ease and generosity we associate with him earlier. A frequent comment about his late music in general has been that it's more difficult to warm to: the writing leaner and sparer than before, the statements often elliptical or unpredictable; offerings, in sum, of a final period when an admired and once most likeable composer, now very deaf, had retreated into an interior world not caring very much whether anyone followed him.

Ideas about music, rather than the music itself! Come to these sonatas from the late *Nocturnes* and *Barcarolles* for piano, on the other hand, the series of great pieces running through Fauré's life, and find on the contrary there's no bleakness and no difficulty at all in catching that voice – still talking to us, if from a little farther off. Certainly the notes are made to work harder and Fauré is less inclined to give us elegance and an attractive surface. But there is no falling-off of quality. The language has undergone a renewal, and any difficulty we have with it is possibly due to its relative unfamiliarity, the innovations of Debussy and Ravel having become less striking to us, for example, while Fauré's vocabulary, with its rather unrevolutionary appearance, continues sometimes to disconcert.

These two new recordings have admirable qualities, the Hyperion especially. Both of them place the sonatas in the context of Fauré's other music for cello, which is another good approach. You notice that the piano parts of his smaller pieces, though simpler, contribute subtleties of movement and character to the whole just as they do in the songs. Five of these individual pieces figure on each recording, but not the same five, Alban Gerhardt and Cecile Licad on Hyperion offering the *Sicilienne*, a number recycled in 1898 from incidental music intended for Molière's *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*, whereas the French duo have instead the *Berceuse* of 1880. That was the year of Fauré's *Elégie*, which retains the power to stop every listener in their tracks and which every cellist plays. Characteristic and high-class Fauré, all of this, that reveals much about the player. Listening to these two



New challenge: Trio Mondrian with Ravel and Shostakovich for their new label (see page 59)

has been a pleasure and it would be unfair to play one off against the other. Gerhardt, the more outgoing personality, has the command of a very fine virtuoso; but François Salque too projects a range of sound and character that makes one listen. He has as well a 'speaking' quality to his tone, from time to time, more intimate in manner, that I particularly like.

His partnership with Eric Le Sage is best in the First Sonata, where there's little to choose between the teams in the edgy first movement, and the Frenchmen shape the middle movement well. But already doubts creep in about the pianist's insistent right hand, and each time I've returned to Salque/Le Sage, reservations about balance detail have increased. These are attributable more often to the recording, I've no doubt, and they come and go, but they are faults which should have been addressed and are responsible for an impression of a duo that only fitfully achieves distinction and doesn't always sustain a focused discourse, or indeed to be really listening to itself. Gerhardt and Licad on the other hand sound free as air, intellectually confident, full of verve, with niceties of balance and intensities never an issue; a convincing frame of colour, movement and sound in place for every movement, every piece.

In the sonatas their partnership makes you sense how Fauré's art became if anything

more vigorous as it progressed, and how he loved playing on the richness of polyphonic composition. Sonata No 1's finale has been the subject of dispute on account of its slow metronome marking, which may not be Fauré's. Hyperion offer the movement twice, a quicker version of it on a separate track at the end of the disc. As a sonata-finale it is certainly an unusual inspiration, beginning as if we were already in the middle of something and invited to eavesdrop. In exploring No 1 I've found it intriguing and prefer it at the more leisurely tempo.

Alpha's disc is programmed as if to invite the listener to take it as a recital, on the trot. It ends with a version of the Piano Trio with clarinet replacing the customary violin; for me, another novelty. Fauré apparently had clarinet ('or violin') in mind when he began the composition but the performance is evidence he must have abandoned further thought of the instrument quite early on – the clarinet is simply not a viable alternative. Alpha announces the issue as Vol 1 of Fauré's complete chamber music, with Eric Le Sage at the hub of it and patronage acknowledged from the Venice-based Centre de musique romantique française. The booklet speaks of poetry as well as music and has lots of pictures; diffuseness reigns. Of these two CDs, the Hyperion, with readable and authoritative notes by Roger Nichols, is obviously the one



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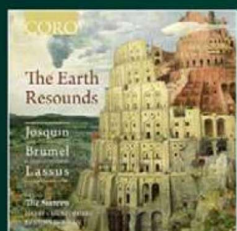
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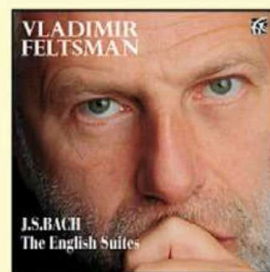
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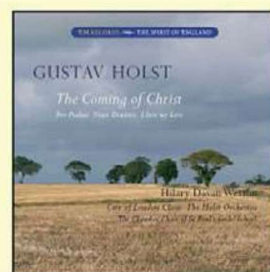
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to get. May it win friends for some excellent and still undervalued music. As d'Indy wrote to Fauré when the Second Sonata was new, 'how lucky you are to stay young like that'.

Stephen Plaistow

## M Hayes

Port Rhombus<sup>a</sup>. Strides – Books 1 & 2<sup>b</sup>. Lucky's Speech<sup>c</sup>. Violin Concerto<sup>ac</sup>. Puppet Theatre<sup>b</sup>. Lucky's Dream<sup>c</sup>. Three Distressed Surfaces<sup>b</sup>. Slippage<sup>ab</sup>. Lute Stop<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Keisuke Okazaki *vn* <sup>b</sup>Jonathan Powell *pf*

<sup>a</sup>Esbjerg Ensemble / Christopher Austin  
NMC © NMC163 (73' • DDD)



### NMC profiles fast-rising composer Morgan Hayes

Five of these 10 tracks are for solo piano, two for solo violin and the other three for instrumental ensembles. The young Japanese violinist Keisuke Okazaki has been an inspiration to Morgan Hayes in recent years, a virtuoso unusual among prizewinners of the major competitions for taking on a concerto such as this one. If the composer is new to you, *Lucky's Speech* could be a good introduction, a two-minute torrent for solo violin, coming seemingly out of nowhere, as Lucky's stream of gibberish does in *Waiting for Godot*.

The Concerto apart – Hayes's most elaborate continuous structure to date – all the pieces are short. Continuities are of the kind that bring film editing techniques to mind, with juxtapositioning and cross-cutting rather than blending or overlapping, and with no notion at all of relating invention to a principal idea. You can sometimes question the coherence (or fail to get the point, perhaps) but never remain oblivious. The startle factor is high. Expect spontaneity and, in the piano pieces particularly, an impression that the gestural activity has been born out of improvisation, under the hands, with the surfaces worked as a painter might. Variations of density and intensity are present, cheek by jowl, and an abundance of contrasts which take one by surprise more often than not, as the endings certainly do, arriving like shutdown.

Expect also the piano keyboard to be treated as a metaphor for musical space, like a canvas. Hayes is minded to be percussive rather than lyrical in his piano-writing and there are frequent passages reaching high saturation levels of horizontal and vertical activity. More interestingly, there are surprises, throughout the disc, which derive from his interest in approaching musical material of diverse kinds, as they do in the work of Michael Finnis, his principal teacher. *Slippage*, one of the ensemble numbers, seems to me to contain an excess of volatility and 'extreme' invention to be accommodated effectively in an eight-minute frame, whereas the more recent

Violin Concerto, at twice the duration, shows a more assured handling of mass and detail and control of an incipient dramatic discourse.

NMC has given Hayes an attractive visiting card which makes me curious to follow what he will do next. I've had the pleasure of recognition in returning to most of what's on offer here, and I warm to the freshness. Excellent performances and recording all round. **Stephen Plaistow**

## Hiscocks

Shades of the Alhambra<sup>a</sup>. Mother & Child<sup>b</sup>. Nocturne<sup>c</sup>. Coral Fantasy<sup>d</sup>. Libretto of the Eight Year Old<sup>e</sup>

<sup>be</sup>Rachel Nicholls *sop* <sup>ab</sup>Sarah Thurlow *cl*

<sup>cde</sup>Madeline Mitchell, <sup>e</sup>Philippa Mo *vns* <sup>e</sup>Michael Turner *va* <sup>ade</sup>Brian Mullan *vc* <sup>abcd</sup>Wendy Hiscocks *pf*  
Symposium © 1389 (71' • DDD)



### Music spanning two decades from the Australian Londoner

Australian music has really come into its own over the past two decades, with Wendy Hiscocks (50 next year) playing no small part. She studied in Sydney with Peter Sculthorpe, whose evoking of spatial vistas through his instrumental writing is perceptible not least in *Shades of the Alhambra* (2009) – five movements for clarinet, cello and piano that render quotations from Washington Irving's writings into an atmospheric whole which is admittedly not quite the sum of its best parts. Of the other works, *Nocturne* (2007) is a deceptively rhapsodic translation of verse by Rabindranath Tagore, while *Coral Fantasy* (1994) elegantly depicts its scenes of marine life within a coral reef against a context of dawn and dusk above the waves. The two vocal items are no less telling in mood: *Mother & Child* (2000) sets four Tagore poems in a touching evocation of infant wonder and tragedy, whereas *Libretto of the Eight Year Old* (1999) sets the composer's recollection of her first trip abroad in a secular cantata recalling such singular works as Barber's *Knoxville* and Tippett's *Boyhood's End*.

The performances are as fine as might be expected, given the calibre of the musicians, but a special mention for Rachel Nicholls, whose thoughtful eloquence is at the service of often testing vocal writing. A pity, then, that the voice has been balanced slightly backwardly; but that between the instruments is unexceptionally fine and the composer's own booklet-notes are a ready enhancement to listening which is never less than pleasurable.

Richard Whitehouse

## Martynov

The Beatitudes. Schubert-Quintet (Unfinished)<sup>a</sup>. Der Abschied

Kronos Quartet with <sup>a</sup>Joan Jeanrenaud *vc*  
Nonesuch © 7559 79627-9 (69' • DDD)



### Kronos Quartet in works by Russian 'minimalist' Martynov

Russia may not immediately spring to mind when one thinks of minimalist music but its influence can be heard in recent music by a number of composers from the country and its neighbours. The works of Latvian Georgs Pelēcis, Ukrainian Valentin Silvestrov and Russian Alexander Knaifel are becoming increasingly known in the West but perhaps one hears the minimalist influence most clearly in Vladimir Martynov, born in Moscow in 1946.

The Kronos Quartet are certainly doing their bit to bring Martynov's music to a wider audience. This disc starts with a wonderfully controlled and projected string arrangement of one of Martynov's best-known works – the elegant, uplifting choral setting of the Beatitudes. This short piece is based on a simple chord sequence characterised by a descending bass-line over which the composer weaves a thread of memorable melodies. It's an effective combination of directness and understatement, although the rest of the recording fails to communicate such a sense of immediacy.

Martynov's *Schubert-Quintet (Unfinished)* combines minimalism and quotation by drawing almost obsessively at times on Schubert's String Quintet in C major. The presentation and systematic repetition of the Schubert material at times lends the work the character of a mechanical exercise, however. The addition of a second cello (played by Kronos alumna Joan Jeanrenaud) certainly imparts a rich orchestral sonority, while in comparison the final track, *Der Abschied*, written in memory of Martynov's father, is sparse and skeletal, with its focus on sounds in isolation reminding one of how Feldman might have sounded were he alive today. **Pwyll ap Siôn**

## Nyman

'Michael Nyman'

Bird Anthem. In Re Don Giovanni. Initial Treat/Secondary Treat. Waltz. Bird List Song. M-Work

Michael Nyman Band

MN Records © MNRC123 (00' • DDD)

From Piano Records original, issued 1981



### Own-label reissue for Nyman's important 'early style' album

When Michael Nyman launched his own label in 2005, many thought that his eponymous second LP would be the first to be reissued. That it has finally seen the light of day is welcome news indeed, and not merely for Nyman aficionados.

Recorded a year before his soundtrack to *The Draughtsman's Contract* hit the cinema screens,



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Nyman's album bears all the hallmarks of his distinctive early style. Powerful, propulsive rhythms on bass guitar, strings and keyboards are held in check by bold-as-brass harmonic patterns, repeated in ever-increasing cycles. Melodic variations on saxophones and violins are laid over this strong foundation, as heard on the visceral opening track, 'Bird Anthem'. It's a wonderful combination of chaos and control, aided by the edgy, raw nature of the performances and by what Nyman describes as the 'audio roughening' process which he and producer David Cunningham gave to the recording. Indeed, many on this recording – including Alexander Balanescu and John Harle – soon established themselves as important performers and composers in their own right.

Some of the tracks contained here have become standard repertoire for Nyman's touring band over the years, especially 'In Re Don Giovanni', the composer's punk-minimalist remake of Mozart's Catalogue aria. But there is also stylistic breadth here for which Nyman does not always receive credit, as heard in the Harold Budd-tinged 'Initial Treat' or the doo-wop infused 'Waltz', which also features free-form improvisations by Evan Parker and Peter Brötzmann. Nigel Osborne summed up the eclecticism of the album in 1983 when he described it as "A Summer Place" in a devilish arrangement by Tartini, pulsating over harmonic sequences from "Sgt Pepper" or "The House of the Rising Sun" in a sheet music transcription by Northern Songs'. It still sounds as refreshingly new today as it did 30 years ago.

**Pwyll ap Siôn**

## Ravel • Shostakovich

**Ravel Piano Trio**

**Shostakovich Piano Trio No 2, Op 67**

**Trio Mondrian**

Challenge © CC72535 (64' • DDD)



**Challenge debut for Israeli ensemble Trio Mondrian**

The Trio Mondrian inhabits two very different worlds on this excellent disc. The piano trios by Ravel and Shostakovich, cast in much the same format, are separated by three decades but by a great deal more than that in emotional content. If Ravel can be reflective, he can also let himself go in the *La valse*-like swing and exuberance of the second movement, return to sombre meditation in the third-movement passacaglia and then round things off with sweetness, light, ardour and grandeur.

Shostakovich's E minor Trio, on the other hand, rarely allows the clouds to part and, when they do, they reveal other clouds beyond, maybe fast-moving ones as in the *Scherzo* but still tinged with threatening blackness. Mentioning the *Scherzo* raises an interesting

point, because in this performance it sounds much quicker than some other ensembles – in recognition, perhaps, of the *non troppo* qualification of the *allegro* marking – tend to take it. Likewise the finale sounds a little more measured; but in terms of duration the Mondrian is almost spot-on with the timing suggested for the *Scherzo* in the first publication of the Trio in 1945, and in the finale is barely 30 seconds longer. In any event, this performance has terrific integrity, blending bitterness and irony with the elegiac, brooding quality provoked by the death of Shostakovich's friend and ally Ivan Sollertinsky, to whose memory the Trio is dedicated. The Mondrians' colours and textures in the Ravel are luminous, with delicacy and gusto achieving a fine equilibrium.

**Geoffrey Norris**

## Shostakovich

**Seven Preludes from 24 Preludes for Piano, Op 34**  
(arr Strakhov). **Viola Sonata, Op 147. Five Pieces from The Gadfly, Op 97** (arr Borisovsky)

**Lawrence Power** vs **Simon Crawford-Phillips** pf  
Hyperion © CDA67865 (57' • DDD)



**Hyperion's lauded duo with Shostakovich's last work**

Shostakovich's Viola Sonata, his final composition, is surely one of the most significant works in the emergent solo viola repertory of the 20th century. Like all his late music, it's dark in tone and unsettled in mood, but tempered by an air of resignation, most strongly felt in the slow finale, with its haunting references to the *Moonlight* Sonata. How slow should this movement be? Yuri Bashmet and Mikhail Muntian play very slowly, way below the metronome indication, and their final minutes create an atmosphere of rapt concentration. Power and Crawford-Phillips stick to the written tempo; not quite as striking, maybe, but there's a big gain in our awareness of the long phrases. Elsewhere, Power and Crawford-Phillips appear more reliable, better-balanced guides to the Sonata than the characterful but wayward Bashmet and the somewhat reticent Muntian.

Power's performance is particularly engaging in the witty, sardonic middle movement, where Nobuku Imai seems, by comparison, too bland. Elsewhere, her playing is sensitive and refined, and Roland Pöntinen plays his part wonderfully throughout. He does seem reluctant in places to play really quietly, where Crawford-Phillips is meticulous, though he could learn from Pöntinen about the sonority and characterisation of several passages.

The Preludes and the *Gadfly* Suite were both arranged by viola players associated with Shostakovich; they neatly illustrate

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Café culture: coffee with The Philharmonics

contrasting aspects of the composer's career and are splendidly performed here.

To sum up: if not the very last word on the Sonata, this is still a finely played programme that can be recommended with confidence.

**Duncan Druce**

*Va Son – selected comparisons:*

*Imai, Pöntinen (2/88) (BIS) BIS-CD358*

*Basbmet, Muntian (3/93) (RCA) 09026 61273-2*

## Turnage

A Constant Obsession<sup>®</sup>. Three for Two.

Four Chants. A Slow Pavane. Grazioso!

<sup>®</sup>Nicky Spence *ten*

**Chamber Domaine / Thomas Kemp**

Resonus  RES10106 (59' • DDD • T/T)



### Post-millennium Turnage in chamber and vocal mode

Although his output has latterly been notable for large-scale orchestral and theatrical works, chamber music has never been absent from Mark-Anthony Turnage's composing and this (download-only) release collates several of those written during 2004-10. Most extended is *A Constant Obsession*, a song-cycle anthologising five English poems in a sequence unfolding from the anticipation to the extinguishing of love. Nicky Spence is limpidly expressive (in a vocal part written for Mark Padmore), and the only proviso might be a certain uniformity in approach across the cycle as a whole which reins in something of the texts' emotional acuity.

The instrumental works make a finely contrasted miscellany. *Three for Two* consists of three 'wishes', with the jazzy impetus of those either side framing one whose wistful inwardness might not be out of place in later Frank Bridge. *Four Chants* also draws on 'popular' idioms, imbued with ironic detachment that goes well with the laconic interplay of violin and piano, while *A Slow Pavane* commemorates the 50th anniversary

of the Beaux Arts Trio in music whose engaging approach to a difficult medium would have been enhanced by inclusion of the two slightly earlier pieces with which it constitutes a triptych. Finally, *Grazioso!* recalls the rhythmic impetus of Turnage's early music in its direct though in no sense slavish homage to the music of Led Zeppelin. Committed performances from Chamber Domaine, definitely an ensemble from whom much can be expected, under the incisive leadership of Thomas Kemp, who also provides the informative contextual notes.

**Richard Whitehouse**

## 'Dedicated to'

**Hedelin Akt Monnagotla Five Pieces**

**Österling Lundi<sup>®</sup> S-D Sandström Five Pieces**

**Tally Winter Island**

**Trio ZiliacusPerssonRaitinen with <sup>®</sup>Dan Laurin *rec***

Phono Suecia  PSCD189 (76' • DDD)



### New trio-based works from five living Swedes

The five Swedish composers represented on this disc range in age from Sven-David Sandström (b1942) to Mirjam Tally (b1976). None is exactly well known outside their native shores, and anyone curious as to why living Swedish composers have lower international profiles than some of their Finnish contemporaries might be tempted to theorise, on the basis of these five works, about a certain lack of personality.

Fredrik Hedelin's *Akt* (2005) is the longest continuous piece and serves to illustrate the point. Hedelin has spent time at IRCAM in Paris and his music has fleeting affinities with that of such 'spectral' composers as Grisey, Harvey or Saariaho. However, while not lacking occasional moments of expressive intensity, this 16-minute play with essentially euphonious textures lacks the edgy vitality that has made spectralism and its adjuncts a musical force to be reckoned with. For most of the time *Akt* is not so much calm as becalmed.

The other works make more impact when seeking to destabilise their most fundamental elements – for example, the eerie *glissandos* that emerge in the first of Sandström's Pieces, or the voiced (not sung) sounds and percussive taps that Mirjam Tally adds to the first part of *Winter Island*. Tebogó Monnagotla's Five Pieces (2007) also manage to raise tension levels above the minimum in places, though this simply makes the relative blandness of the prevailing moods the more obvious. The playing of the ZiliacusPerssonRaitinen Trio, in abundantly characterful recordings, is polished to a fault and it would be good to hear them in more varied and challenging repertory.

**Arnold Whittall**

## 'The Philharmonics'



**Godowsky Alt-Wien Kováč Yiddische Mame**

**Kreisler Marche miniature viennoise. Schön**

**Rosmarin. Caprice viennois J Strauss II**

**Kaiserwalzer (arr Schoenberg). Wein, Wein und**

**Gesang (arr Berg). Lagunenwalzer**

**(arr Schoenberg). Schatzwalzer (arr Webern).**

**Rosen aus dem Süden (arr Schoenberg)**

**The Philharmonics**

*Video director* **Tilo Krause**

Accentus  ACC20228;  ACC10228

(64' + 10' • NTSC • 16:9 • DTS-HD MA, DTS 5.1 &

PCM stereo • O • s)

Recorded live at Café Sperl, Vienna, March 2011

Bonus: 'How Schoenberg came to arrange waltzes by Strauss'



### Vienna Phil members waltz live at the city's Café Sperl

'Don't judge a book by its cover', they say, and the same might be said here. Only with difficulty does its uninvitingly monotone front reveal Schoenberg's pencil drawing of himself. By contrast, the DVD itself is a colourful evocation of old Vienna that admirably demonstrates the power of DVD to add positively to what one merely hears on CD.

In sound only, the arrangements that Schoenberg and his pupils Berg and Webern made of five Strauss waltzes are certainly an intriguing historical curiosity but they all too readily seem a poor substitute for the works in full orchestral garb. The brilliant idea here is to perform them inside a historic Viennese coffee house – the 130-year-old Café Sperl in the Gumpendorfer Strasse. The performers – members of the Vienna Philharmonic – are shown making their way from the State Opera House by public transport to the Sperl. There they perform before customers and waiters going about their everyday business – drinking coffee, reading newspapers, enjoying the music and silently conversing – all without interference to the actual music-making. Shots of night falling outside complete the impression of time spent in convivial surroundings.

The five Strauss waltzes are proficiently played and idiomatically phrased, and enjoyment is heightened by the further inclusion of three joyous pieces by Kreisler and an arrangement of Leopold Godowsky's evocative *Alt-Wien*. As a bonus item, moreover, there's a well-judged background talk on Schoenberg's Society for Private Musical Performances, for which four of the Strauss waltz arrangements were made. It's nowhere explained – least of all in the sadly mangled booklet-note – that Schoenberg arranged the fifth waltz, the *Kaiserwalzer*, for a quite separate occasion in 1925. Yet the whole represents an altogether admirable demonstration of how DVD can combine enlightenment and pleasure to joyous effect. **Andrew Lamb**



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## JUILLIARD ORIGINALS

The ensemble's pioneering recordings of avant-garde quartets have been collated and remastered. **Philip Clark** is still hearing new things



'Robust authority': the Juilliards on disc

As Edgar Varèse, John Cage and Pierre Henry were moving the argument on, kicking down the doors of perception about what music could be – or kicking doors literally in Pierre Henry's case – music lovers the world over were still struggling to reconcile themselves with Bartók, Schoenberg and Webern: how their music linked into the 'classical' tradition as they knew and understood it.

Columbia Records was under no obligation to give anybody any answers about this new music, but that a company with Frank Sinatra and Tony Bennett on its books chose to record the first cycle of Bartók's string quartets is symptomatic of a wholesome core belief in music. Buy 'The Voice of Frank Sinatra' and you were subsidising the Juilliard Quartet's Schoenberg. Ol' twelve-tones is back.

Six decades on, the Juilliard String Quartet continues to prosper. It's a completely different line-up today, of course, but this six-CD anthology of their earliest recordings finds their robust authority – the group's calling card, especially in new music – already at play.

Whatever studio surgery West Hill Radio Archives has deployed to filter out squeaks, hisses and shushes on these pre-magnetic tape recordings should be made available on the NHS. Until now I hadn't quite grasped how luxuriantly warm the Juilliard's take on the first

movement of Bartók's String Quartet No 1 sounds. The queerly dislocated voicings of the Second Quartet's last movement and the muffled, vibrato-less clusters that subliminally launch the Third Quartet are outlined in stark, point-of-view detail here: a weightless hover that sounds electronic.

Just to be clear: this is not 'the' Juilliard Bartók cycle, cut in 1963 when the quartet returned for a stereo remake. In 1949 they were recorded in mono; and while cellist

*'The Juilliards were prepared to act against long-cherished assumptions about how string quartets "ought" to behave'*

Arthur Winograd was no match for the charismatically louche sound of his successor Claus Adam, they are never fazed by Bartók's technical and psychological extremes. That First Quartet's first movement basks in textural sunlight but has an expertly calculated (for which don't read 'calculating') intensity of line and architecture. The Juilliards make the case that herein is Bartók's first great 'arc'-shaped structure.

Beginning at 5'05", Winograd's low-register cello drone cracks into the refined textures around it and another clue emerges as to why these four men were the defining American string quartet of their age. The pinball-machine violence of the Fourth

Quartet's *Allegretto pizzicato* movement and the Fifth Quartet's *Alla bulgarese Scherzo* tell us the same thing – that the Juilliards were prepared to act against long-cherished assumptions about how string quartets 'ought' to behave. 'Bartók *pizzicatos*' (the string is snapped against the fingerboard) trash 'classical' politeness with delirious physicality; the lyricism of the Sixth Quartet is quarried with equal grit. The Juilliard Quartet don't do coy. Bartók's melodic writing is non-generic and unsettling. You can hear the quartet trying to work out why.

Meanwhile, I've been trying to fathom why Schoenberg's four string quartets sound so cumbersome and clunky after Bartók's – writing, you understand, as the great man's number one fan. True enough, any composer's quartets are prone to suffer by comparison; but in Schoenberg's case there's an inconsistency between material and medium. The material has been meticulously worked out, dramatic transformations coming as standard. The opening bars of the Third Quartet sketch out a basic 2/2 eight-quaver motif which is obsessively reconfigured: rhythms displaced, melodic material sieved, new space sought and then occupied. It's mesmerising but not heard especially imaginatively as 'string music'.

Schoenberg's overall structural trajectory presents no problem for the Juilliards but, untypically, his diligently terraced dynamic indications are skated over, resulting in a below-par monochrome sound picture. Until soprano Uta Graf enters in the third movement, the Second Quartet is similarly stiff, and the standout performance here is the Fourth Quartet – that long unison passage in the slow movement sustained like a long summer, the march-based finale properly snarling. The Juilliard's performance of Webern's Five Movements for string quartet is still one of the finest around. The linear beauty of the second movement is cathartic after the sequence of thunderbolt shocks in the first movement: inchoate material that collapses in on itself, punctuating *pizzicatos* scarring the flow like timpani hits, heightened drama squashed into tiny vignettes. I wonder if anyone thought to send Frank Sinatra a copy. Because he paid for it. Sort of. **G**

## THE RECORDINGS



**Bartók** String Quartets Nos 1-6  
**Berg** Lyric Suite.

String Quartet Op 3

**Schoenberg** String Quartets Nos 1-4

**Webern** Five movements for string quartet, Op 5

*Juilliard Quartet* (r1949-52)

West Hill Radio Archives © WHRA6040



# Instrumental



## Jed Distler reviews Mozart from Kristian Bezuidenhout:

*'His tapered phrase endings, tiny breath pauses and occasional note elongations sound arch and mannered'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 65**



## Bryce Morrison rounds up Chopin from pianists familiar and unsung:

*'You may hear a more fervent or volatile Chopin but you will be hard-pressed to find one more musicianly'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 67**

## JS Bach

French Suites, BWV812-17<sup>a</sup>. English Suites, BWV806-11<sup>b</sup>. Seven Toccatas, BWV910-16<sup>c</sup>

**Blandine Rannou** *hpd*

Zig-Zag Territoires © ⑤ ZYT111002 (5h 13' • DDD)

From <sup>a</sup>ZYT020401/2, <sup>b</sup>ZYT030401/2 (10/03),

<sup>c</sup>ZYT050501

## JS Bach

Goldberg Variations, BWV988

**Blandine Rannou** *hpd*

Zig-Zag Territoires © ② ZYT111001 (90' • DDD)



### Rannou's new Goldbergs and a reissue for her English and French Suites

The French harpsichordist Blandine Rannou is a charismatic artist, a distinctive voice in a field crowded with technically immaculate but intermittently inspired players.

Supplementing her release of a new recording of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, Zig-Zag has issued a handsome box-set of her earlier Bach recordings, bringing together the 2001 French Suites, the 2003 English Suites and the 2005 Toccatas. Taken together with the *Goldbergs*, these recordings offer a sustained argument that, among the many legitimate and fruitful approaches to the keyboard music of Bach, a freely Gallic style is not only plausible but serves the German master surprisingly well.

Rannou has tended to fare better with French critics than she has among English and American ones. Reviewing the English Suites in 2003, Jonathan Freeman-Attwood admired the 'grand solemnity in the resonant Ruckers-Hensch copy on which Rannou plays' and her 'cultivated classicism'. But it wasn't a rave. There is, admittedly, something idiosyncratic about her artistry but I find it often charming, sometimes shocking in a revelatory way, and rarely if ever cold or didactic.

From the very first notes of her Toccatas, it's clear that Rannou conceives them more in the spirit of the French unmeasured prelude than in the manner of either Frescobaldi or Buxtehude. The metre is elastic, notes are

grouped together for gestural effect, long pauses are inserted for rhetorical purposes and an improvisatory spirit prevails. When order is needed, Rannou enforces it, sometimes with great drama, as in the entry of the fugue theme in the C minor Toccata (BWV911), which is announced as if bathed in a hard, penetrating, silvery light.

Though not so rhythmically freewheeling as the Toccatas, the dances of the English and French Suites indulge in other kinds of freedom. Ornament, though rarely cluttered, is profuse and imaginative, sometimes so much so that one imagines Rannou sketching these pieces (during the repeats) rather like a virtuoso draughtsman draws without lifting his pencil from the page. Intervals are filled up, the high and low points of phrases connected with elastic ribbons of invention.

All of this continues in her new traversal of the *Goldbergs*, where, if anything, the whimsy and finesse is even more welcome. The Aria is taken almost agonisingly slowly but, as each section is repeated, the reasoning behind the tempo becomes clear: Rannou is beginning the variation process even before the polonaise-like snap of Bach's Var 1, pouring into the interstices of the aria an extra, deeply personal elaboration. Dance-like movements, such as Var 7, have a bumptious energy that is delightful. All the luscious colours of her instrument, based on the Hensch *ravalement* of a 1636 Ruckers, are exploited in the two-manual variations. The contrasts in the instrument's tonal quality and a fetchingly light and playful interpretation make Var 20 sound like a character sketch by François Couperin.

Bach of course admired Couperin, and never has his music sounded so much in debt to the French master. Not everyone will find this overlay of French style entirely convincing. The pulse can get a bit seasick at times, especially when distorted for the insertion of ornament. But these moments are rare. Far more memorable than the occasional lapse is the sense that Rannou has found new realms of colour and new avenues of seduction in these well-trod works.

**Philip Kennicott**

## Beethoven

'Piano Sonatas, Vol 1'

Piano Sonatas - No 4, Op 7; No 5, Op 10 No 1; No 6, Op 10 No 2; No 7, Op 10 No 3; No 8, 'Pathétique', Op 13; No 9, Op 14 No 1; No 10, Op 14 No 2; No 11, Op 22; No 12, Op 26; No 13, 'Quasi una fantasia', Op 27 No 1; No 14, 'Moonlight', Op 27 No 2

**François-Frédéric Guy** *pf*

Zig-Zag Territoires © ③ ZYT111101 (3h 36' • DDD)

Recorded live



### Vol 1 of Guy's complete Beethoven sonata project

Strange it is that Beethoven's most lauded movement, the first of Op 27 No 2, marked *Adagio sostenuto* at two beats to a bar, is subject to a variety of tempi - from crotchets (Solomon) to c88 (Artur Schnabel, both on EMI). Perhaps a slow speed conjures the atmosphere of 'Moonlight', which wasn't the composer's sobriquet. He called the work *Sonata quasi una fantasia* and a faster gait not only gets closer to concept, it also gives the melody coherence. François-Frédéric Guy doesn't dawdle but hews closer to Solomon than Schnabel, and rather misses the point. Yet in the *Presto agitato* finale of this sonata, the first on the set, Guy offers a pointer to his breadth of thought and feeling in the 11 works on offer.

Technically, he is in total control. If the close recording captures some breathing, it also captures a pianist of fine mind-body coordination. Guy's whole being seems to expand into the music and he embodies an emotional involvement through rhythmic flexibility, mostly sonorous tone and a left hand the equal of his right in weight, articulation and dynamic nuance - qualities that help create an aura of authority in, for example, the first movement of Op 22. A gripping verve surges through this *Allegro con brio*, the rhetorically stated *fortissimo* sequences in G minor, C minor and F minor early in the development adding suspense to the whole section. Nor does he miss the wry humour inherent in the *Scherzo* of Op 14 No 2; or the melancholy of the *Largo e mesto* of Op 10 No 3. If the darkly rumbling coda begins closer to *piano* rather than *pianissimo* as directed, Guy's distinct bass-line, a graduated swell of sound with fluent mobility



across the bars, creates its own tension; and true softness may be heard elsewhere, like the *Adagio cantabile* of Op 13 and the introduction to Op 27 No 1.

It's in the slow movements that interpretative gauntlets are met with an individual musical voice; and no more magnificently than in the *Largo con gran espressione* of Op 7. Guy takes Beethoven's marking at face value and, at a hypnotically tenacious pulse of crotchets=35, he builds this movement, immense in spiritual scope, into a profoundly stirring edifice. 'Not a note cold', to quote Pablo Casals. And whatever the odd reservation, not a note perfunctory anywhere either. **Nalen Anthoni**

*Selected comparisons:*

Kempff, 1951-56 (4/96) (DG) 447 966-2GDO8

Lewis (A/O5, 12/06, 11/07, 6/08) (HARM) HMEX290 1902/11

## Chopin

Four Ballades. Largo. Mazurkas - No 13, Op 17 No 4; No 45, Op 67 No 4; No 46, Op 68 No 1. Polonaise No 5, Op 44. Waltzes - No 6, Op 64 No 1; No 9, Op 69 No 1

**Jean Muller** *pf*

Fondamento © FON1005008 (63' • DDD)



**Chopin from the Luxembourg Conservatoire piano professor**

It is surely a critic's joy to discover a major talent relatively unknown and appearing on a minor label. Jean Muller is a 33-year-old Luxembourgish pianist celebrated by Jean-Claude Penner as a complete artist, with 'fingers, head and heart'. Such seeming hyperbole is not misleading. Heard here in mostly familiar Chopin, Muller makes everything enthrallingly fresh and unfamiliar. Indeed, you seem to be hearing the Four Ballades for the first time, such is the pianist's recreative urgency. Backed by a savage technical voltage, he lifts you far above studio conditions or the polished if politely impersonal expertise too familiar from the competition circuit. Few pianists of any age or nationality have recreated the storming codas of the First and Fourth Ballades (the first truly *appassionato*, *il più forte possibile* and *Presto con fuoco* – a unique conglomerate in Chopin) with such brilliant fury, any possible picture of Chopin as an ailing salon figure banished from the imagination.

That Muller is no less striking in the halting, neurasthenic poetry of the A minor Mazurka, Op 17 No 4, and in the bittersweet melancholy of the A flat Waltz, Op 69 No 1, says much for his extraordinary range and scope. In short, here is a pianist who can pin you back by the ears with heroic strength and propulsion but who is no less subtle and insinuating when Chopin is lost in reverie and introspection. Can any lover of Chopin's music – or of anyone else's – afford to be without this disc?

**Bryce Morrison**

## Granados

Goyescas. Valses poéticos

**Luis Fernando Pérez** *pf*

Mirare © MIR138 (76 • DDD)

## Granados

Goyescas. El pelele. Allegro de concierto

**Garrick Ohlsson** *pf*

Hyperion © CDA67846 (64' • DDD)



**The Goyescas from Ohlsson and native Spaniard Pérez**

Writing of Goya, Granados recalled his 'models, quarrels, his loves and flatteries, those pink and white cheeks against lace and black velvet, those tight-waisted bodies, hands of jasmine and mother-of-pearl resting on jet trinkets. All of these things dazzled and possessed me.' It is hardly surprising, then, to find his tribute *Goyescas* teeming with 'great flights of imagination and difficulties' (Granados), a daunting and elusive challenge met by both Luis Fernando Pérez and Garrick Ohlsson with formidable command.

Yet pressed, I have to say that it is Pérez who is the more idiomatic and who penetrates to the very heart of the matter. Less rhythmically razor-sharp and focused than his teacher Alicia de Larrocha in, say, 'El fandango de candil', he has none the less imbibed much of her inimitable colouration and nuance. His rubato is of a caressing warmth and suppleness, a constant ebb and flow that characterises every aspect of Granados's sumptuously bejewelled score, and his romantic leeway is very much his own. At the same time, you can't go far wrong with Ohlsson, who could hardly be more affecting in 'Quejas, o La maja y el ruiseñor' or more able to express the dark and glittering hearts of both 'El amor y la muerte' and 'Epílogo, serenata del espectro'.

On brighter notes, Pérez gives us the *Valses poéticos* as a curtain-raiser, delighting in the irresistible charm of each waltz, while Ohlsson closes with *El pelele* and the *Allegro de concierto*, where Granados lets his hair down to produce a gaudy but immensely enjoyable virtuoso frolic. For novel good measure, Pérez adds the *Intermezzo* transcribed by the composer and written just before his untimely death. Both discs are finely recorded (the Pérez of demonstration quality) and in Pérez you have a major interpreter of a unique and richly challenging masterpiece. **Bryce Morrison**

*Goyescas* – selected comparison:

De Larrocha (6/10) (EMI) 261514 2

## Koechlin

Les heures persanes, Op 65

**Ralph van Raat** *pf*

Naxos © 8 572473 (57' • DDD)



**Ralph van Raat moves from minimalism to complexity**

Charles Koechlin's name has a prominent place in the development of French music but his music has so far eluded me, just as *Vers Ispahan*, the diary by Pierre Loti of a journey through Persia which inspired this cycle of 16 movements, has not crossed my radar. Though Koechlin (1867-1950) was much admired by Debussy, Ravel, Milhaud, Roussel, Satie and other fellow composers, audiences have never shared their enthusiasm. Few will have heard a note of Koechlin in a recital.

With its hints of prescient Messiaen and multi-layered impressionism, *Les heures persanes* ('The Persian Hours') has a unique sound world, though these miniature tone-poems (the longest lasts 7'27", the shortest 1'47") are not designed to put a spring in your step. You have to be in the right frame of mind for their amorphous, atmospheric, polytonal evocations of day and night, their predominant very slow tempi and (my main criticism) lack of expressive variation: one 'Clair de lune' (there are three) could easily be replaced by another or, say, 'Les collines au coucher du soleil' (No 13).

Written between 1916 and 1919, much of it notated on three staves to accommodate Koechlin's complex layers (perhaps not surprisingly, he orchestrated the work in 1921), *Les heures persanes* unfolds in a dreamlike way in Ralph van Raat's committed reading, playing that is truly inside the music – an artist ploughing his own furrow and thoroughly in tune with Koechlin's own defiant credo: 'Eh bien, tant pis! I'll write what I want to, and modulate as I like provided I don't end in the original key – the day on which I found my own way, everything was all right.' Good recording, sensitive breathing space between tracks, and with the pianist's own booklet.

**Jeremy Nicholas**

## Liszt

'Complete Works for Organ'

**István Ella** *org*

Querstand © VKJK1019 (5h 10' • DDD)

Played on the Jehmlich organ at the Church of St Wolfgang, Schneeberg



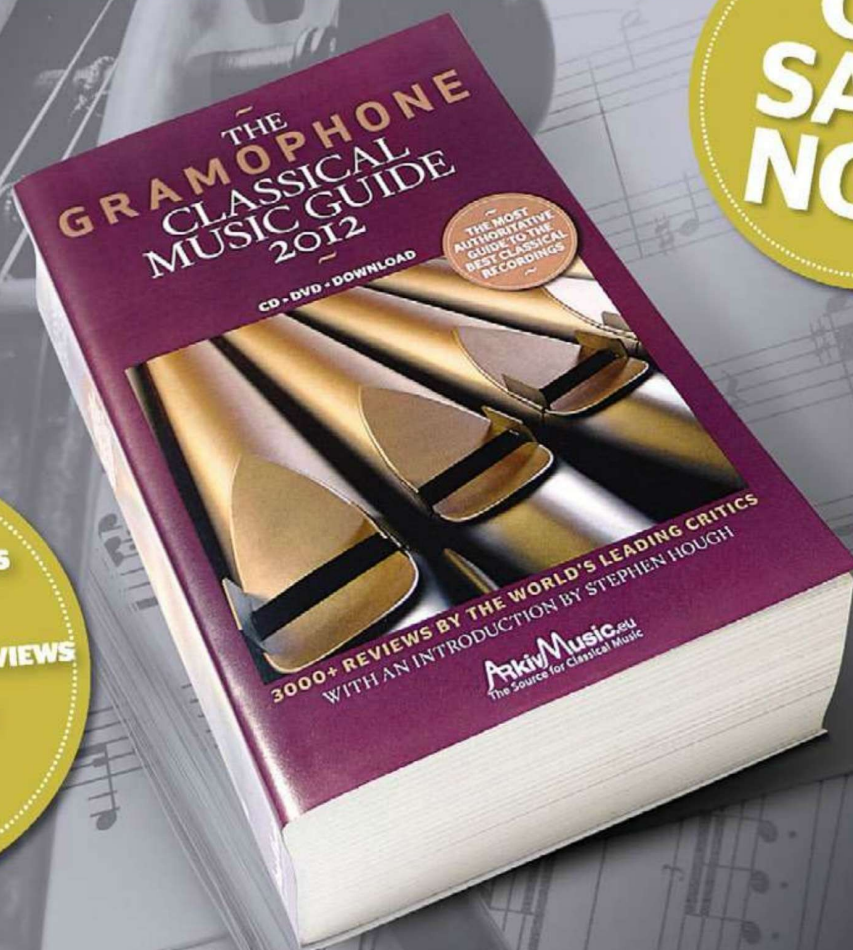
**From Saxony, every note Liszt wrote for the organ**

The booklet is infuriating. The 12-page German/English text has an (admittedly interesting) essay on 'Franz Liszt and the Organ Landscape of Central Germany', a history of the organ (the 1998 Jehmlich in the church of St Wolfgang in Schneeberg) we are hearing and the organist's biography. Of the music there is not a single word beyond the track-listing. This leaves much to be desired,



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Gramophone Classical Music Guide 2012



leaving the novice as much in the dark as the aficionado. On disc 1 we have 'Evocation'. Would this be *Evocation à la Chapelle Sixtine* (after Allegri and Mozart), S658? Ah, yes, it would. Disc 5 boasts 'Kreuzandachten I-IV' and 'San Francesco'. A sentence would have told the buyer that these are, respectively, four arrangements of movements from *Via Crucis* and the Prelude to *The Canticle of the Sun*. But I'm not going to spend the rest of this review writing Querstand's booklet for them.

As Leslie Howard's monumental survey on Hyperion has shown, there are large swathes of Liszt's piano works that remain undeservedly neglected. The same cannot be said of the complete organ works. Beyond the three indisputable masterpieces (the *Prelude and Fugue on the Name B-A-C-H*, the *Fantasia and Fugue Ad nos, ad salutarem undam* and the *Variations on Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen*) there is only a handful of works which aspire to be in the same class – all of them, except the brief curtain-raiser that is *Excelsior!*, transcriptions: *Orpheus* (Liszt's orchestral tone-poem), *Evocation*, *Trauerode*, *Angelus! Prière aux anges gardiens* (identified here as *Angelus*) from Book 3 of *Années de pèlerinage*, and 'Dante' (from the *Dante Symphony*).

There are nearly 40 works here, lasting something over five hours. The completist/reference-library tag of the project lends to it a certain doggedness – great, good or mediocre, like it or not, all the music has got to be included – and to a certain extent this is reflected in the performances. István Ella is mercifully unflashy – he is clearly a musician of great integrity – but the playing is all rather dutiful and stolid. His registrations are conservative and unimaginative: in *Ad nos*, for example, the *tromba* entry in the first 'movement' is hardly distinct, the array of colours with which organists such as Simon Preston, Thomas Trotter and Xavier Darasse invest the central section is entirely absent and the sparkling *allegro vivace* section in the finale fails to ignite, a rare example, it must be said, of Ella's crisp articulation deserting him. The two Bach-inspired works come off well, nicely paced in St Wolfgang's pleasing acoustic, and 'Dante', *Orpheus* and 'Evocation' are among other highlights well worth hearing. So a bit of a curate's egg and I'd much rather go with Peter King at Bath Abbey (three discs on Regent, 7/11) for the essential rather than the complete Liszt. **Jeremy Nicholas**

## Mozart

'Keyboard Music, Vol 3'

Piano Sonatas – No 12, K332; No 13, K333.

Variations on 'Ein Weib ist das herrlichste Ding, K613. *Fantasia*, K396 (comp M Stadler)

**Kristian Bezuidenhout** /p

Harmonia Mundi © HMU90 7499 (69' • DDD)



### Vol 3 for the South African's Mozart on fortepiano

As with its two predecessors, the third volume of Kristian Bezuidenhout's Mozart keyboard music cycle attests to the young fortepianist's remarkable technical polish and command, as well as his cultivated though sometimes overly studied interpretations. A case in point concerns the first movement of the Sonata in B flat, K333, where Bezuidenhout's tapered phrase endings, tiny breath pauses and occasional note elongations sound arch and mannered next to Ronald Brautigam's more direct and songful ebb and flow on BIS (the timbre of Brautigam's similar McNulty instrument is suaver and more rounded than Bezuidenhout's thinner, more harpsichord-like sonority), although the *Andante cantabile*'s legato and detached articulations and subtle harmonic stresses are conveyed with admirable expressive economy. In the *Allegretto gracioso*, it's a toss-up between Bezuidenhout's dry wit and Brautigam's wider dynamic scope.

Similarly, Bezuidenhout's scrupulous voice-leading and balances between the hands throughout the variations on *Ein Weib ist das herrlichste Ding* (by either Schack or Gerl) finds a slightly more animated and spontaneous counterpart in Brautigam. However, the petulant arpeggios of the C minor Fantasy, K396, inspire greater dynamism and dramatic thrust. This review's first two sentences pretty much apply to the closing work, the F major Sonata, K332. In both sonatas' first movements, incidentally, Bezuidenhout observes the exposition repeats, while Brautigam also repeats the development and recapitulation sections.

**Jed Distler**

*Kybd Wks – selected comparison:*

*Brautigam (BIS) BIS-CD1633/6*

## Rameau

Pièces de clavecin – premier livre;

'Suite in E'; 'Suite in D'

**Jill Crossland** pf

Signum © SIGCD278 (71' • DDD)



### Rameau follows Bach for British pianist Crossland

Rameau's harpsichord pieces can work wonderfully well on the modern concert grand, as Marcelle Meyer proved to magical effect, not to mention modern-day champions such as Angela Hewitt and Alexandre Tharaud. Jill Crossland's intelligent, stylish, tasteful, tonally resourceful and beautifully recorded Rameau interpretations take their place alongside these luminaries. Her playing throughout the nine pieces of the *Premier livre* in A minor that open the disc consistently delights. Following a sensitively timed opening section, Crossland

### Tune thy Musicke to thy Hart Tudor & Jacobean music for private devotion

Stile Antico (joined by Fretwork) explores a long-neglected repertoire – the wealth of Tudor and Jacobean sacred music written for domestic devotion, rather than for church worship. Culled from collections intended for use in private homes, these pieces by Tomkins, Campion, Byrd, Tallis, Dowland, Gibbons and others, offer a unique insight into the turbulent religious climate of the time and the thriving musical culture at its heart

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**29th February**, Milton Keynes – The Stables

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makes an easy transition into the fleet ending of the *Prélude* and engages in gentle yet shapely dialogues between hands in the following Allemandes. Both the Courante and Gavotte manage to be rhythmically assertive and debonair at the same time. Regarding the Suite in E, it's impossible to stake out a clear-cut preference for either Crossland or Hewitt (Hyperion, 2/07), any more than one can choose between apples and oranges. Crossland plays the Gigue en Rondeau with a lightness, delicacy and freedom that contrasts to Hewitt's relatively stricter metrics and stronger bass underpinning. Similarly, in 'Le rappel des oiseaux', Crossland depicts Rameau's aviary with playful alterations of voicings and accents, whereas Hewitt's darker, more dynamic touch and octave transpositions suggest more foreboding flying objects. By contrast, Crossland's rendition of the familiar 'Tambourin' movement boasts more vivacity and backbone than Hewitt's more understated traversal, although Hewitt's solid left-hand underpinning provides a lilting, almost Brahmsian anchor to the concluding Rondeau that's quite different from Crossland's dulcet, melody-oriented reading.

Crossland's elegance and subtle tonal gradations particularly shine in the Suite in D; listen to how she appears to throw the introspective phrases of 'Les soupirs' away while moving over the bar-lines, or the sense of weightless propulsion she generates in the churning rhythms of 'Les tourbillons'. This is Crossland's finest CD yet, and one hopes that she'll set down Rameau's remaining keyboard works in due course. **Jed Distler**

## Weiss

Sonatas – in B flat; in D minor. Two Pieces

Bernhard Hofstötter *lte*

Querstand © VKJK1011 (72' • DDD)



### Austrian soloist with 'Bach of the lute' Weiss

The two substantial lute sonatas by Silvius Leopold Weiss on this recording, each of which comprises for the most part those dances typical of the Baroque suite, are to be found in separate sources: one in a manuscript in the Saxon State and University Library, Dresden, the other in a manuscript in the Glinka State Central Museum of Musical Culture, Moscow. The D major Courante is also preserved in the Moscow manuscript, the D major *Prélude* in numerous others.

Of Bernhard Hofstötter's teachers – Toyohiko Satoh, Yasunori Imamura, Konrad Junghänel and Hopkinson Smith – it's the latter two that spring most readily to mind as Hofstötter, playing a superb 13-course Baroque lute built in 2008 by Hendrick Hasenfuss after JB Weigert, judges when best to submit to the

exigencies of form and convention – and when to simply let go.

The preludes – the B flat Sonata's is called an *Introduzione* – are rhythmically free, the ebb and flow of tension brought out to perfection; there is also a similarly relaxed feel to the expressively rendered G minor Sarabande and Allemande of the D minor Sonata, as well as to the flowing Courantes and the rippling D minor Presto.

But Hofstötter's playing can sometimes sound overly fussy, as in the B flat Sonata's *Menuet* and *Presto*, both of which lack grace, and the perhaps too-liberal ornamentation throughout. Nevertheless, at no point is Weiss's musical language compromised, and indeed it is in the *Andante* of the D minor Sonata than one finds some of the most sympathetic and beautiful Weiss-playing yet committed to disc. **William Yeoman**

## Moriz Rosenthal



'The Complete Recordings'

**Albéniz** Iberia – Triana **Chopin** Berceuse, Op 57. Etudes, Op 10 – No 2; No 5. Etudes, Op 25 – No 2. Mazurkas – No 16, Op 24 No 3; No 17, Op 24 No 4; No 23, Op 33 No 2; No 25, Op 33 No 4; No 31, Op 50 No 2; No 39, Op 63 No 1; No 41, Op 63 No 3; No 42, Op 67 No 1. Nocturnes – No 2, Op 9 No 2; No 8, Op 27 No 2. Nouvelle Etude No 3 Piano Concerto No 1, Op 11 – complete<sup>a</sup>; Largo<sup>b</sup>. Piano Sonata No 3, Op 58. Preludes, Op 28 – Nos 1, 3, 6, 7, 11, 13, 19, 20 & 23. Tarantelle, Op 43. Waltzes – No 5, Op 42; No 7, Op 64 No 2; No 14, Op *posth* **Chopin/Liszt/ Rosenthal** Chants polonais, S480 – No 1, Mädchens Wunsch; No 5, Meine Freuden **Debussy** Images – Reflets dans l'eau **Handel** Suite No 5, HWV430 – Air and Variations, 'The Harmonious Blacksmith' **Liadov** A Musical Snuffbox, Op 32. Prelude, Op 46 No 1 **Liszt** Hungarian Rhapsodies, S244 – No 1. Liebesträume, S541 – No 3 **Rosenthal** Carnaval de Vienne. Fantasy on Themes from Johann Strauss. New Carnaval de Vienne. Papillons **Schubert** Moments musicaux, D780 – No 3 **Schubert/Liszt** Soirées de Vienne, S427 – No 6 (many works in multiple versions)

**Moriz Rosenthal** *pf*

<sup>a</sup>Berlin State Opera Orchestra / Frieder Weissmann

<sup>b</sup>NBC Symphony Orchestra / Frank Black

APR © © APR7503 (6h 6' • ADD)

Recorded 1928-42



### The modest entire catalogue of an outstanding Polish pianist

There are 97 titles on these five CDs lasting just over six hours, a timing that includes two live broadcasts from 1935 (BBC) and 1937 (NBC). Of these 97 titles, Rosenthal recorded two or more versions of 18 of them – hardly surprising since, between his first recordings (March or April 1928) and last (March 1942), Rosenthal recorded for six different labels and seems to have been keen that each one should

have a version of his favoured party pieces. Take Chopin's Mazurka in G major, Op 67 No 1. This he first recorded in 1928 for Argentine Odeon (a disc which only came to light in 2004 when it was bought on eBay for \$54), then for Edison the following year (unpublished), for Parlophone in 1931, HMV in 1935 and HMV again in 1937 (unpublished). When APR says 'The Complete Recordings', it means it. Every extant take is included. Pianophiles will indulge themselves comparing the nuances, phrasing and sometimes finger slips in the four versions of Chopin's Waltz in C sharp minor, Op 64 No 2, a work which Rosenthal had an inimitably seductive manner of playing, or the five versions of the 'Black Keys' Etude, each one of which Rosenthal ends with an uncharacteristically inelegant *glissando*.

Non-specialists to whom such variations of detail are of no interest might be deterred from investigating. I would urge them to think again because they will be missing out on hearing one of the indisputably great pianists in history, albeit captured when he was judged to be past his prime (he was 65 when he made his first disc recording) – though few living pianists at the height of their powers can equal the sexagenarian Rosenthal in his own dizzying *Fantasy on Themes from Johann Strauss* (the best of the two versions is from 1928 and in amazingly good sound) or, even better, *Carnaval de Vienne* ('Humoresque on Themes of Johann Strauss') recorded in 1930.

As one of the leading lights of the so-called Golden Age, Rosenthal, a friend of Strauss, Tchaikovsky, Brahms and particularly Anton Rubinstein, was of the era when the personality of the performer was paramount. He studied with the Chopin pupil Karol Mikuli, Joseph Dachs (a pupil of Czerny) and finally Liszt. In his heyday no one matched him for speed and power. These are still evident in many of the performances here (listen to the extraordinary 1931 recording of Chopin's C major Etude, Op 10 No 1, played with hardly any pedal) but it is Rosenthal's old-world charm, beguiling sound and almost conversational phrasing that make him unique and unforgettable. Among the best are his 1935 recording of Chopin's Nocturne in E flat, Op 9 No 2, Schubert's *Moment musical* No 3 (1937) and the *Largo* from Chopin's Sonata No 3 from 1939. The finale of the latter somewhat taxes the 77-year-old, as do the final pages of the same composer's E minor Concerto recorded in 1930 with the first movement's opening *tutti* truncated (as was then customary) and the orchestral introduction to the 'Romanza' completely cut.

With Ward Marston's superb restoration and remastering, APR's exemplary annotation and a first-rate booklet from Jonathan Summers, this is, quite simply, pianophile heaven. **Jeremy Nicholas**



GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

## A TASTE OF CHOPIN

**Bryce Morrison** listens to a selection of recent and reissued recordings stemming from the Polish master's 2010 anniversary



Quiet celebrity: the Czech pianist Ivan Moravec plays Chopin

Some years ago Daniel Barenboim spoke of the opium in Cortot's Chopin and of the spine in Rubinstein's. These brief but resonant descriptions suggest that if Chopin needs a near-narcotic, hallucinatory magic, he also needs discipline, even a touch of formality. Only then will his passion and precision coalesce and balance ideally. And here, in newly released and reissued recordings, internationally acclaimed, recently celebrated and relatively unknown artists rub shoulders in offerings ranging from the superlative to the less distinguished.

First and foremost there is **Marek Szlezer**, a young pianist blessed with a naturalness and warmth that avoid all 'knowingness', all tricks of the trade. What breadth and turbulence he achieves in the F minor Fantasie with such enviably unforced means. Always he finds a direct, unimpeded path to musical truth and eloquence. You may hear a more fervent or volatile Chopin (from, say, Cortot and Argerich respectively) but you will be hard-pressed to find one more musicianly. Everything is given time to breath and speak ('to weep and sing and

sigh', to quote Liszt) and, listening to the central benediction at the hearts of the *Marche funèbre* and the *Scherzo* from the Op 35 Sonata, you can almost imagine Myra Hess (for Stephen Kovacevich 'a virtuoso in sound') hearing a pianist after her own heart. Never would she have felt inclined, as she

*'It is as if you heard Chopin himself playing – a master of ever-changing colour, light and shade'*

often did, contemplating rushed fences and telescoped phrases to cry out, 'Vive le sport!'

After such wonder, I have to say that **Daniil Trifonov**, despite his recent triumph in the Tchaikovsky Piano Competition, comes as something of a disappointment. In Chopin's First Concerto, given in the half-pint version for piano and strings, his elegant and fine-toned manner is relatively detached with playing that (notably in the finale) is insufficiently strong-minded or characterful. Again in the Barcarolle he is overly subdued, Chopin's miraculous vision

seen as it were from too great a distance. Once more, after an unusually pensive start to the Second Impromptu, Trifonov fails to invest Chopin's endlessly unfolding narrative with a more personal poetic commitment. His Tarantella, too, provides a less than exhilarating photo finish.

Then there is **Evelyne Brancart** live and fearless to the point of aggression in the 24 Etudes (she omits the *Trois Nouvelles Etudes*). Her shot-from-guns virtuosity in, say, Op 10 No 4 is countered by a prosaic account of the morbid, near-Wagnerian progression of Op 10 No 6. True, she relaxes in Op 25 No 7 (most elegiac of the Etudes) to achieve a greater degree of poetry and inwardness. But in Op 25 No 2 her tumultuous rush of events would hardly have prompted Schumann to speak of music 'as soft as the song of a sleeping child'. Overall there is nervous energy in super-abundance but the crossing of the Rubicon from pragmatism to poetry is too rarely achieved. Too often the Etudes remain études. Also, Brancart's claim that she has found a culinary parallel to each Etude (Op 25 No 7 is 'Tiramisu', Op 25 No 4 'dancing shrimp with spicy sauce') is more amusing than to the point.

By comparison **Nicolas Stavy**, while literally live, gives us Chopin with tranquillisers. There is a laissez-faire touch to his Polonaise-fantaisie (music of tireless innovation and originality) and, if he is at his best in the seemingly unending lines and sequences of the *Largo* of the Third Sonata, also in the cloudy and again far-sighted Op 45 Prelude (a prophecy of late Brahms), he is insufficiently vivid and compelling elsewhere.

This leaves me with **Ivan Moravec**, who has maintained a quiet celebrity throughout his long and distinguished career. Playing with immaculate virtuosity and with all of his patrician eloquence and refinement, he is endlessly mercurial and fascinating in the Four Scherzos. Audacious to the point of idiosyncrasy he may be but when you hear him in, for example, the Op 25 No 7 Etude, you are made conscious of a supreme artist. For my late and much-missed colleague Joan Chissell, it is as if you heard Chopin himself playing, a master of ever-changing colour, light and shade. I could hardly end on a more celebratory note. **G**

## THE RECORDINGS



Son No 2, Ballade No 3, Fantasie, Op 49, Nocturnes, Op 27, Mazurkas, Op 30  
Marek Szlezer  
Dux (D) DUX0792



Conc No 1, Barcarolle, Op 60, Impromptus, Op 29 & 36, Tarantella, Op 43  
Daniil Trifonov; Polish Chbr  
PO Sopot / Wojciech Rajski  
Dux (D) DUX0832



Etudes, Opp 1 & 25  
Evelyne Brancart  
Delos (C) DE3411



Son No 3, Ballade No 4, Polonaise-fantaisie, Op 61, Prelude, Op 45, Selected Nocturnes  
Nicolas Stavy Paraty (P)  
PARATY207103



Four Scherzos, Selected Etudes and Mazurkas  
Ivan Moravec  
Supraphon  
(P) (B) SU4059-2



# Vocal



David Gutman reviews  
Mahler from Michael Gielen:

*'Quieter moments are exquisitely handled, transparent and vulnerable in precisely the right manner'* ► REVIEW ON PAGE 71



Richard Wigmore on Christian  
Immler's 'degenerate' song recital:

*'With his personably high baritone – mellow yet capable of incisive edge – Immler convinces'* ► REVIEW ON PAGE 75

## JS Bach

**JS Bach** Cantatas – No 82, *Ich habe genug*; No 150, *Nach dir, Herr, verlangst mich* – Sinfonia; No 161, *Komm, du süße Todesstunde* – Recitative; *Der Schluss ist schon gemacht*; No 169, *Gott soll allein mein Herze haben*<sup>a</sup>; No 200, *Bekennen will ich seinen Namen* **GM Hoffmann** *Schlage doch, gewünschte Stunde* (formerly BWV53)

**Andreas Scholl** *countertenor*<sup>a</sup> **Junko Takamaya** *sop*

**Michael Feyfar** *ten*<sup>a</sup> **Raitis Grigalis** *bass*

**Basle Chamber Orchestra** / **Julia Schröder** *vn*

Decca © 478 2733DH (63' • DDD • T/I)

## JS Bach

Cantatas<sup>a</sup> – No 54, *'Widerstehe doch der Stunde'*; No 170, *Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust*, Concerto for Oboe and Violin, after BWV1060<sup>b</sup>.

Suite for Violin and Strings, after BWV1067<sup>c</sup>

**Daniel Taylor** *countertenor*<sup>b</sup> **John Abberger** *ob*

**Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra** / **Jeanne Lamon** *bc/vn*

Analekta © AN2 9878 (69' • DDD • T/I)



Alto cantatas from Scholl in  
Alsace and Taylor in Ontario

There are four extant cantatas that Bach composed for solo alto voice. Three were recorded by Andreas Scholl in collaboration with Philippe Herreweghe in 1997 (BWV35, 54 and 170 – Harmonia Mundi, 5/98). Now, at last, Scholl has recorded the fourth: *Gott soll allein mein Herze haben* (BWV169). With its larger and more varied scoring, some Bach experts even claim that this is the greatest of the four. The organ solo parts in the sinfonia and two arias are played adroitly by an organist whose identity should have been acknowledged in the booklet. First performed by a bass soloist, *Ich habe genug* (BWV82) was revised by Bach at least twice for different voices and occasions: the soprano version (with the oboe obbligato replaced by flute) has been recorded often, the third and last version for alto not so frequently. Scholl's compassionate use of words and melodic sweetness in 'Schlummert ein' is the best recorded work he has produced for years; during the first aria Julia Schröder shapes the interweaving strings poignantly and the

uncredited oboist plays tenderly. Two bells provide pictorial charm as they convey the imagery of chiming clocks in *Schlage doch, gewünschte Stunde*, a short funeral piece probably composed by Georg Melchior Hoffmann; Decca perpetuates the aria's old misattribution to Bach. At least Clifford Bartlett sets the matter straight in his very short booklet-note; but he does not explain that the short and sweet *Bekennen will ich seinen Namen* (BWV200) is Bach's arrangement of an aria from a Passion oratorio by Stölzel. Scholl provides an article about the challenges of understanding Bach's music (abridged from a *Goldberg* essay published in 2005).

Two of the other Bach alto cantatas are performed sublimely by the Canadian team of Daniel Taylor and Tafelmusik. John Abberger's oboe d'amore and Jeanne Lamon's violin double each other exquisitely in the softly lilting ritornello that begins *Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust* (BWV170), and Taylor's gentle singing has the perfect atmosphere of sincerely beautiful piety. In subsequent arias, organist Charlotte Nediger plays dexterously and movingly, and the conclusion, 'Mir ekelt mehr zu leben', has an easy mood of graceful joy. The five-part string texture in the radiant opening of *Widerstehe doch der Sünde* (BWV54) is played deliciously and the exhortation for us to 'Just resist sin, lest its poison seize you' has seldom seemed so quietly persuasive.

Tafelmusik also give accomplished performances of the Second Orchestral Suite (transposed down a tone and with the flute part reassigned to violin, as some scholars believe Bach might have previously done), and one of the double harpsichord concertos with its solo parts reconditioned for oboe and violin. **David Vickers**

## Britten

**Winter Words**, Op 52. **Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo**, Op 22. **Folksong Arrangements** – Come you not from Newcastle?; Little Sir William; The Salley Gardens; The Ash Grove; The Last Rose of Summer; The Ploughboy

**Nicholas Phan** *ten* **Myra Huang** *pf*

Avie © AV2238 (58' • DDD • T/I)



First solo recording from  
a former 'One to Watch'

Nicholas Phan's debut recital recording in an all-Britten programme initially seems strategically quixotic. Though American singers do justice to Britten, one would need much inner motivation to record cycles as difficult as *Winter Words* and *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo* as a calling card. Though Phan's fresh tenor voice, Myra Huang's intelligent pianism and the recording's warm acoustic conspire to make an inviting, distinctive recording, Phan's underlying impetus comes out in his own booklet-notes.

This openly gay American of Chinese and Greek heritage has the current political polarisation of the United States on his mind when he recounts his hesitant *Winter Words* performance at a small Missouri university: 'Any differences we might have had were never even noticed, and instead we found ourselves connecting to each other through our common life experiences.'

One listens in vain, though, for an agenda in Phan's cultivated performances. He has less ownership with Thomas Hardy's poems in *Winter Words* than Peter Pears, maintaining a formal but not detached distance. Phan enshrines the language with flawless though not over-articulated diction, and also resists over-managing the listener's interpretation of the meaning. This approach is less viable in the folksongs; they feel a bit starchy. In contrast, the Italian-language Michelangelo sonnets, some reflecting the sculptor's frustrated infatuation with Tommaso dei Cavalieri, receive much more italicised treatment.

At first, Phan sounds like a typical English tenor, lighter than Pears, less severe than Ian Bostridge, more mellow than Mark Padmore but perhaps not as deep as any of them. Several songs into the disc, one realises how Phan's upper range blooms, not by fanning out at the top but in a more integrated emergence of vocal brightness, like a cloud moving away from the sun. He lacks Philip Langridge's conversational fluency; his main strength is spinning a long, expressive line in ways that seem to confide in the listener. That quality



is particularly welcome in the Michelangelo sonnets that have so much information packed into the vocal line – even if the high tessitura is a bit of a strain.

**David Patrick Stearns**

*Winter Words, Michelangelo Sonnets – selected comparisons:*

*Pears, Britten (REGI) RRC1365*

*Langridge, Bedford (NAXO) 8 557201*

## Cherubini

**Cherubini** *Démophon* - Overture. *Il Giulio Sabino* - Sinfonia; *I mesti affetti miei*. *Ifigenia in Aulide* - Turbata ai dubbi accenti. *Ti lascio adorato mio ben*. *Armida abbandonata* - Sinfonia; *Qual da venti combattuta*. *Mesenzio, re d'Etruria* - Sinfonia. *D'un dolce ardor la face* (insertion aria for Salieri's *La grotta di Trofonio*)

**Maria Grazia Schiavo** *sop*

**Auser Musici / Carlo Ipata**

Hyperion © CDA67893 (58' • DDD • T/t)



The young Cherubini with arias for England, France and Italy

This is not the grand, passionate Cherubini of post-Revolutionary Paris, admired by Beethoven, Weber and (more ambiguously) Berlioz, but a young composer honing his craft as a composer of Italian *opera seria*. Surprisingly perhaps for an Italian, memorable melodic invention was not, and never would be, Cherubini's forte. But there is much agreeable music in this sequence of overtures and arias written for Florence, London and Paris during the 1780s. The overture to *Démophon*, while not quite the 'indisputable masterpiece' claimed by the writer of the informative if understandably partisan booklet-note, is an impressive essay in pre-Beethovenian C minor rhetoric. And if several of the arias here sound to us too cheerful for their desperate sentiments, not least the frolicking coloratura in 'I mesti affetti miei' from *Il Giulio Sabino* (a resounding flop in London), Cherubini already reveals his gift for the striking gesture and colourful, woodwind-rich orchestration.

Although her confident, laser-bright soprano can become a tad shrill *in alt*, Maria Grazia Schiavo displays a nimble coloratura technique, phrases elegantly and makes much of her words. She vividly catches the pathos and agitation of the *scena e rondeau* 'Ti lascio adorato', and finds a tenderly softened tone for the graceful love song 'D'un dolce ardor'. The Tuscan period band Auser Musici are robust rather than specially subtle partners, with, as recorded, a distinctly abrasive string tone. But there is no doubting the energy and commitment of their playing, whether in the turbulent *Démophon* Overture or the beguiling *sinfonia concertante* for violin, cello, flute and oboe in the Overture to *Giulio Sabino*.

**Richard Wigmore**



Maria Grazia Schiavo and Carlo Ipata record Cherubini at the Teatro Verdi, Pisa

## Delius

**'The Complete Delius Songbook, Vol 2'**

Songs from the Danish - Set 1; Set 2. *Noch ein mal*.

*Lieder nach Gedichten von Friedrich Nietzsche*.

Four Posthumous Songs (Danish) - No 3, *We*

*laughed when days were merry*; No 4, *I hear in*

*the night*. Songs to Words by Various Poets

(Danish & Swedish). Songs to Poems by

Paul Verlaine. *Avant que tu ne t'en ailles*.

Eleven Early Songs (Danish, German & French)

**Mark Stone** *bar* **Stephen Barlow** *pf*

Stone Records © 506019 2780109 (76' • DDD • T/t)



Vol 2 of Mark Stone's  
Delius song traversal

Mark Stone here offers the second volume of his project to record Delius's songs complete. With his consistently sensitive singing, beautifully accompanied by Stephen Barlow, it makes an important contribution to the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of the composer's birth this year.

When virtually all of Delius's mature songs

are very measured in their lyricism, it is remarkable what a wide range of expression Stone finds in bringing out the meaning of the words, not least in his high *pianissimo* phrases sung in a half-tone. Stone provides helpful and illuminating notes on each song alongside the texts and translations, most of which in the Scandinavian songs have translations by Delius himself or occasionally by his wife, Jelka. The French and German songs by contrast are sung in the original languages, with several of the Heinrich Heine settings better known in versions by Richard Strauss, and most of the Paul Verlaine settings from the *Sagesse* collection better known in versions by Fauré or Debussy.

None the less, these Delius settings are all very sensitive and attractive, while the two posthumously published songs, presumably dictated to Eric Fenby as the composer's amanuensis during his last illness, include one much simpler, 'We laughed when days were merry', to words by the Danish poet Holger Drachmann. The other Drachmann





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setting, 'I hear in the night', translated by the composer's wife, is one of the few which are relatively fast.

The Verlaine settings are all of the poet's most popular poems, including Delius's own favourite, written when the poet was in prison for manslaughter, 'Le ciel est, par-dessus le toit'. The section of settings of words by Swedish as well as Danish poets are all evocative in their inspiration from nature, 'Let springtime come', 'Black Roses' and 'Summer Landscape' with flowing accompaniments. Otherwise, most of the piano-writing is relatively simple, with Barlow bringing out all possible expression.

The section of 11 early songs, some composed when Delius was still in Florida, is instructive in that they are both more varied and more conventional, in fact hardly identifiable as the work of the composer, attractive as they are. They include a fast setting of Heine, 'The Spruce Tree', and a light-hearted setting of 'Fortunio's Song' from a play by Alfred de Musset.

Most moving is the last song that Delius ever wrote for voice and piano, dictated in 1932, 'Avant que tu ne t'en ailles', to words by Verlaine. Satisfyingly, Stone ends the whole collection with a roistering drinking song, 'Wine Roses', to words by Delius after Jens Peter Jacobsen. Altogether an impressive follow-up to Stone's first volume of Delius songs (3/12), recorded in well-balanced sound. **Edward Greenfield**

## La Rue

'Portrait musical'

Missa de Septem Doloribus Beatissime Mariae Virginis. Missa Ave Maria. Vespera. Missa Sub tuum praesidium. Pourquoi tant me fault il. Il viendra le jour désiré. Pourquoi non ne veuil je morir. Doleo super te. Missa Alleluia  
**Capilla Flamenca / Dirk Snellings**  
Musique en Wallonie © 3 MEW1159 (3h 8' • DDD)



**Snellings's La Rue recordings rounded up and augmented**

For my money, Capilla Flamenca is currently among the top two or three ensembles for early Renaissance polyphony, and Pierre de la Rue is the composer on whom they've lavished the most recordings. But even if you've got all four of the discs from which this new set is compiled, you may yet be tempted by the inclusion of a fourth Mass, *Sub tuum praesidium*, of which the new recording happens also to be the first. Incidentally, no composer of this generation apart from Josquin is now better represented on disc, with more of his works available in performances of real distinction.

That's as well, because though no stranger to striking gestures (as the chansons recorded here eloquently demonstrate), La Rue's idiom is

more understated, less immediately striking than, say, Obrecht's or Agricola's. But understatement has its own eloquence: the *Kyrie* of *Missa Alleluia*, for example, is a classically poised essay in ostinato technique, while the more elaborate *Mass of the Seven Sorrows* is a masterpiece by any standard (and its performance by Capilla Flamenca one of the finest recordings of a 15th-century Mass on CD): the appearance of a quotation from Josquin's *Ave Maria, virgo serena* at the *Osanna* is simply sublime. The *Missa Ave Maria* and the aforementioned *Sub tuum praesidium* don't contain gestures as memorable as this but, as I say, La Rue is a 'slow-burner', and in performances of this quality the music's subtleties will more readily disclose themselves to the attentive listener.

The motets and chansons included here are every bit as accomplished as the Masses and, as I suggested earlier, they communicate perhaps more immediately: the motet *Doleo super te* (itself the third part of a larger piece, alas not included in its entirety) and the chanson *Pourquoy non* are both deeply affecting. Add to this the new set's handsome, beautifully illustrated packaging and it's clear that Capilla Flamenca and Musique en Wallonie have done La Rue proud. **Fabrice Fitch**

## Mahler

Lieder aus Des Knaben Wunderhorn. Blumine  
**Christiane Iven** sop **Hanno Müller-Brachmann** bar  
**SWR Symphony Orchestra, Baden-Baden & Freiburg / Michael Gielen**  
Hänssler Classic © CD93 274 (75' • DDD • T/t)



**Two years in the making: at last Gielen produces Mahler songs**

A loose miscellany rather than a defined cycle, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* has 'grow'd like Topsy' in recent years. Michael Gielen includes not merely the songs later incorporated into the Second and Fourth Symphonies but also the purely instrumental 'Blumine' movement Mahler excised from the First after its initial performances. Riccardo Chailly's version (Decca, 5/03) deploys as many as four soloists, whereas Thomas Hampson's latest account (DG, 2/11) finds the singer alone, fronting a conductorless ensemble formed by the principal players of the Vienna Philharmonic. There is no consensus about which songs should be allocated to a female voice or which work best as duets. Best not be snuffy about Gielen's choices and interpolations.

As so often, the veteran 'modernist' proves himself a highly perceptive Mahlerian. The more militaristic numbers may lack the heft of Leonard Bernstein's Concertgebouw (DG, 6/89<sup>8</sup>) but quieter moments are exquisitely handled, transparent and vulnerable in precisely the right manner. Gielen has spoken of how the

conflict between individual and society in the 20th century can be felt in Mahler's writing. Even when the music is peaceful, it should seem as if the ground is constantly being swept away from under his feet. Only those looking for the biggest vocal personalities – and they don't come bigger or more contentiously mannered than Elisabeth Schwarzkopf and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau for George Szell (EMI, 1/69<sup>8</sup>) – are likely to feel short-changed. Incidentally, that classic recording generally moves more swiftly than Gielen's or Bernstein's. While Lucia Popp's superlative solo rendering of 'Wo die schönen Trompeten blasen' for the latter is undeniably slow, Gielen launches his own sequence with an unusually spacious 'Der Schildwache Nachtlied'.

Gielen's singers are younger than much of the competition. Hanno Müller-Brachmann must now be counted a rising star. His penetrating, never heavy bass-baritone is pleasing and he is blessed with fine diction too, projecting the humour of 'Lob des hohen Verstandes' to excellent effect. Like most exponents he is taxed by the likes of 'Revelge', where his elegant dryish timbre frays a little even though the expression here is relatively contained. Christiane Iven, a regular at the Stuttgart Staatsoper, is billed as a soprano but retains a mezzo-ish timbre. With texts and translations provided, admirers of Gielen's Mahler should not hesitate to acquire what is his belated first recording of these songs. Pieced together from sessions held over two years, in different venues, the results are sonically consistent, recessed and natural with vocal lines just occasionally submerged as they might be in concert. **David Gutman**

## Mendelssohn

Verleih uns Frieden gnädiglich. Christus, Op 97.  
O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden. Vom Himmel hoch  
**Sandrine Piau** sop **Markus Butter** bar  
**Robert Getchell** ten **Accentus; Ensemble Orchestral de Paris / Laurence Equilbey**  
Naïve © V5265 (48' • DDD)



**Equilbey with motets and Christus fragments**

Many readers will know the recitative, trio and chorus that begins 'When Jesus our Lord was born in Bethlehem'. It comes from *Christus*, an oratorio that Mendelssohn embarked on in 1846 but left incomplete on his death the following year. It was to be in three parts, covering Christ's birth, Passion and Resurrection. Mendelssohn was evidently suffering from writer's block, and what remains is the section mentioned above and, from Part 2, a mixed recitative and chorus followed by a chorale. (The booklet-note puzzlingly refers to 13 completed movements.)

Equilbey directs a winning account of the





Talking Poulenc: Jonathan Lemalu, Malcolm Martineau (at the piano) and producer John West

Christmas section, though some will possibly be surprised by her tempi, which are brisk in the trio, leisurely in the chorus. She does what she can with the chorus from Part 2, where Mendelssohn's inspiration is fitful indeed. 'Wir haben ein Gesetz', fugal as in Bach's *St John Passion*, is particularly feeble. Equilbey manages to rake the embers at the preceding 'Kreuzige ihn'. The most memorable section – a relative term – is the melancholy, *pizzicato*-accompanied 'Ihr Töchter Zions'.

The disc opens with *Verleih uns Frieden*, a charming miniature with an introduction for the cellos. In the previous year, 1830, Mendelssohn composed *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden*, two choruses framing a baritone aria. *Vom Himmel hoch* likewise begins with a spacious chorale prelude but with added trumpets and timpani. The soloists sing with great beauty and feeling, and the choir and orchestra – the former rather backwardly recorded – are equally fine. **Richard Lawrence**

## Poulenc

'The Complete Songs, Vol 3'

Airs chantés<sup>b</sup>. Colloque<sup>ag</sup>. Mazurka<sup>a</sup>.

La grenouillère<sup>d</sup>. Montparnasse<sup>g</sup>. Hyde Park<sup>g</sup>.

Deux mélodies – Le pont<sup>f</sup>; Un poème<sup>e</sup>. Le portrait<sup>e</sup>.

Miroirs brûlants<sup>b</sup>. ...Mais mourir<sup>e</sup>. Main dominée par le cœur<sup>g</sup>. La fraîcheur et le feu<sup>e</sup>. Calligrammes<sup>g</sup>.

La souris<sup>c</sup>. Monsieur Sans Souci<sup>h</sup>. Nous voulons une petite soeur<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Lorna Anderson, <sup>b</sup>Sarah Fox, <sup>c</sup>Lisa Milne *sops* <sup>d</sup>Ann

Murray *mez*<sup>e</sup> John Mark Ainsley, Robert Murray *ten*

<sup>g</sup>Thomas Oliemans *bar* <sup>h</sup>Jonathan Lemalu *bass-bar*

Malcolm Martineau *pf*

Signum © SIGCD272 (62) • DDD • T/t



## Veterans and newbies for Poulenc songs, Vol 3

This is the third volume in the impressive coverage of all Poulenc's songs masterminded by the superb pianist Malcolm Martineau. In reviewing Vol 1 (8/11), Edward Greenfield commented that the recording balance tends to favour the piano. But in the present set any slight piano dominance comes from the sheer character of Martineau's playing. This is immediately effective in the opening group of four *Airs chantés*, sung with engaging character and immediacy by Sarah Fox. In 'Colloque', which follows, Lorna Anderson is joined by Thomas Oliemans, which brings most beautiful singing in a nostalgic love duet.

Indeed, all the love songs here are memorable in that delicate way the French make their own. In the new French school, Cocteau had called for 'an end to clouds, waves, aquariums, water nymphs and fogs' while, with Wagner and Schumann in mind, another target was 'music one listens to head-in-hands'. Yet the down-to-earth evocations are equally memorable. Apollinaire's 'La grenouillère', ravishingly sung by Ann Murray, contrasts with the passionate 'Montparnasse' (the ardent

Thomas Oliemans again), followed by Apollinaire's brief but vivid picture of 'Hyde Park'. 'Un poème' shows Martineau's delicious pianism at its most delicate and Sarah Fox returns to sing the *Miroirs brûlants* with characteristic beauty and flair.

The six items which make up the pictorial but unified *La fraîcheur et le feu* show the versatility and lyric intensity of John Mark Ainsley and again Martineau's responsive virtuosity. The seven *Calligrammes* are more romantic but the pictures of rain and cicadas bring plenty of vivid colour, and the closing 'Voyage' is quite haunting. 'Le souris' makes a touching postlude before the pair of humorous portraits, 'Monsieur Sans Souci' and the tale of Madame Eustache, who has 17 daughters ('not one too many'), ends this splendid recital in mock-humorous vein. With eight outstanding singers and the pianist all on top form, this is the most attractively inviting of these Poulenc anthologies so far issued. Excellent documentation too. **Ivan March**

## Rachmaninov

'Romances'

Six Songs, Op 4 – No 1, O net, molyu, ne ukhodi

(Oh no, I beg you, do not leave!); No 2, Utro

(Morning); No 3, V molchan'i nochi taynoy (In the silence of the mysterious night); No 5, Uzh ti, niva moya (Oh you, my corn field!). Six Songs, Op 8 –

No 2, Ditya kak tsvetok ti prekrasna (My child, you are beautiful as a flower); No 5, Son (A dream).



Twelve Songs, Op 14 – No 1. Ya zhdu tebya (I am waiting for you); No 4. Ya bil u ney (I was with her); No 7. Ne ver' mne, drug (Do not believe me, my friend); No 9. Ona, kak polden', khorosha (She is as beautiful as noon); No 10. V moyey dushe (In my soul); No 11. Vesenniye vodi (Spring waters); No 12. Pora (It is time!). Twelve Songs, Op 21 – No 4. Oni otvechali (They replied); No 6. Otrivok iz A Myusse (An excerpt from Alfred de Musset); No 7. Zdes' khorosho (How nice this place is); No 12. Kak mne bol'no no (How much it hurts). Fifteen Songs, Op 26 – No 2. Vsyu otnyal u menya (Everything I had); No 3. Mi otdokhnyom (We shall rest); No 6. Khristos voskres (Christ is risen!); No 9. Ya opyat' odinok (Once again, I am alone); No 12. Noch' pechal'na (Sad night); No 13. Vchera mi vstretilis' (Yesterday we met); No 15. Prokhodit vsyo (Everything passes). U vrat obiteli svyatoy (At the gates of the holy cloister). Ti pomnish' li vecher (Do you remember the evening?)

**Dmitri Hvorostovsky** bar **Ivari Ilja** pf  
Ondine © ODE1207-2 (64' • DDD • T/T)



### Echoes of Hvorostovsky past for the baritone's Ondine debut

Though Dmitri Hvorostovsky revisits repertoire he recorded in his 1991 'Russian Romances' disc in the heady months following his sensational win at the Cardiff Singer of the World competition (Philips, 10/91 – nla), he has little to fear from comparisons with his more svelte-voiced younger self. Early in his career, he made his name more in recitals than in opera. Now a seasoned Verdi baritone some 20 years later, Hvorostovsky opens up these Rachmaninov songs with operatic *fortissimos* that add stature to the music as well as with *pianissimos* that can convey depths of quiet terror, both of which were quite beyond the grasp of his younger self. Vocal precision is sometimes compromised. Some of the high, softer notes fail to glow. But his long-admired breath control is, if anything, more impressive. Spot-check comparisons between the 1991 Philips disc and this new recital are telling: the all-in-one-breath phrase that ends 'In the silence of the mysterious night' is now even longer, more firm and infused with meaning beyond words. Also, when the younger Hvorostovsky went for vocal gravity – often demanded by the feverish texts the composer chose to set – he sometimes drove his voice so hard that the pitch tended to spread. That doesn't happen now and doesn't need to: his baritone has a far richer palette of vocal resources to call upon.

The songs are arranged in roughly chronological order, showing the composer sometimes trafficking in the sentiment of parlour music and at other times digging down into his young soul for a more personal mode of expression. But what sets certain Rachmaninov songs above the others is this:

because the composer's lyrical gifts didn't translate into the more easy-going melodiousness of Tchaikovsky songs, these miniatures are best judged by their pianistic element. When you subtract the vocal line, do you still have a viable piece of music? Accompanist Ivari Ilja makes that distinction particularly obvious through the quality of his playing, which is appropriately romantic in sweep but Mozartian in detail.

In the larger landscape of Rachmaninov recordings, Sergei Leiferkus (Chandos, 4/96) has a more characteristic Russian bass sound but, even alternating songs with Joan Rodgers, doesn't wear well over the course of a recital disc. Elisabeth Soderström's complete song set (Decca, 5/94) shows a beloved singer whose rhetorical resources went way beyond the usual grasp of a mid-weight voice. However, in songs such as 'Christ is risen!', one of Rachmaninov's best, a strong male voice really is preferable to convey the the big-boned vocal lines and the weight of the song's utterance. Hvorostovsky brings an almost evangelistic intensity to this one. And why shouldn't he, considering how the song describes Christ's sadness at the current state of the world? This is as fine as any currently available single-disc collection of Rachmaninov songs. **David Patrick Stearns**

## Telemann

**St Matthew Passion** (Danziger Passion, TWV5:53)

**Martin Kietmann** Evangelist **Klaus Mertens** Jesus

**Cantamus Chamber Choir, Halle; Bouquet Vocalis**

**Male Choir, Halle; Capella Savaria / Pál Németh**

New Classical Adventure © NCA60235 (76' • DDD)

Recorded 1990



### Telemann's 1754 Passion after 22 years in the can

Those who shudder with disbelief at the idea of Telemann composing over 40 passions should bear in mind that Bach's two-and-a-half-hour masterpiece was not the only model; this *St Matthew Passion*, dating from 1754, is only half that length. Almost certainly commissioned for liturgical use in Danzig, it reuses some existing material and follows the local pattern in which the biblical text is set as narrative recitatives and crowd choruses, while poetic commentary comes from pre-existing chorales. What it does not have is any arias, thus differing both from Bach and from most of Telemann's other Passions, and bringing a change of emphasis which sharpens the focus of the story-telling and presumably heightened the communal experience for the work's original church audience. It also makes it somewhat less colourful, however, and for all that the recitatives are expressive and the crowd choruses direct and effective, this disc is more likely to serve as interesting reference for Baroque students and Telemann nuts than

simply to provide a generally enjoyable listen. The recording was made in 1990, presumably in response to the work's then recent rediscovery. Perhaps encouraged by the Passion's relatively swift pace, the performance is a committed one – Klaus Mertens's ardent 'Eli, eli, lama asabthani' is memorable – but the choral singing lacks finesse and the step-out solos are weak and off-mic. The booklet gives the chorale texts in German only and omits the Gospel narrative altogether, though that can of course be fished out of any Bach *St Matthew Passion* you have to hand. And hey, if you have this piece on your shelves but not the Bach, it really is time you rethought your priorities.

**Lindsay Kemp**

## Zelenka

**'Sepolcri – Music from Eighteenth-Century Prague'**  
**Immisit Dominus pestilentiam, ZWV58. Attendite et videte, ZWV59. Deus dux fortissime, ZWV60**

**Hana Blažiková** sop **David Erler** counter ten

**Tobias Hunger** ten **Tomáš Král** bass

**Collegium Marianum / Jana Semerádová**

Supraphon © SU4068-2 (66' • DDD)



### Early Zelenka from a specialist Prague ensemble

These three 20-minute cantatas, dating from 1709, 1712 and 1716 respectively, receive their world premiere commercial recordings with this release. Yet while they are among Zelenka's earliest surviving works (and have required some partial but uncontentious reconstruction to bring them to the studio), they are certainly the work of a fully competent composer in his early thirties, and one whose distinctive artistic personality is already apparent. For here, in music designed to accompany contemplation of the Holy Sepulchre on Good Friday at Prague's principal Jesuit College, the Klementinum, is unmistakably the Zelenka of plangently expressive harmonies, melancholy sensibility, graceful counterpoint and pliant, free-roaming melody. Though the more consistent balance of later works is yet to be achieved, his many admirers will surely be delighted at the opportunity to acquaint themselves with this younger but clearly recognisable and lovable version of their hero.

Collegium Marianum introduce us to him in performances that are skilful, stylish and attractive to the ear. The air is tender rather than forcefully dramatic, and some listeners may prefer a more vivid response to, say, the *staccato* string chords which accompany the 'dropping tears of blood' in *Immisit Dominus pestilentiam* or the militaristic bass aria which announces 'God, the mightiest commander' in *Deus dux*. Others, however, may well feel that the fond intimacy evoked by the small orchestra and choir and by the clear-voiced, sensitive solo



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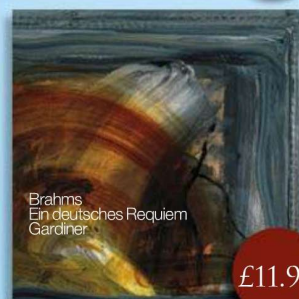
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singers is spot on. It is certainly good that the choruses do not swamp the arias while still being allowed their finely wrought but gentle grandeur. Jana Semerádová unobtrusively keeps things on course, yet shows off her own musicianship in a soft-breathed flute obbligato to Hana Blažiková's exquisitely sung 'Orate pro me' in *Immisi*. A beautiful, warming Baroque discovery. **Lindsay Kemp**

## 'Mare nostrum'

'Orient - Occident: Dialogues'

Christian, Muslim and Jewish chants from around the Mediterranean

Montserrat Figueras sop Lior Elmaleh ten

Hespèrion XXI / Jordi Savall

Alla Vox © 2012 AVSA9888 (158' • DDD/DSD • T/I)



### Last words from Figueras in Savall's Mediterranean project

This release reprises the sumptuous production values of Alia Vox's recent projects centred on Jerusalem and on the Borgias. When I interviewed Jordi Savall for *Gramophone* last summer (11/11), he described 'Mare nostrum' as an attempt at promoting intercultural dialogue, using the history of the different cultures and religions clustered around the Mediterranean both as a metaphor and as illustration. As with the projects just mentioned, the supporting texts are translated in many languages (here as many as 10). The result is a very handsome book, the quality of whose illustrations is frequently breathtaking.

If I've taken so long to get to the music, it's to do justice to the scope and intention of this project, in which music is the catalyst, singing not only on its own behalf but also in the service of ideas; and because this is the first Alia Vox project to have been issued since the death of Montserrat Figueras late last year. Figueras herself takes centre stage throughout, all bar one of the sung numbers being divided or shared between her and the fine Israeli tenor Lior Elmaleh. This concentration on just two singers gives the project a remarkable coherence, despite the varied provenance of the texts and music, which ranges throughout Europe. As with the previous, similarly conceived 'Jerusalem' project (4/09), notated Western 'early music' is barely touched on – no bad thing in itself, though something of a surprise. Equally, Savall's collaboration with non-Western musicians receives here perhaps its fullest expression. The quality of the performances is gentle and serious. Even the livelier instrumental numbers are imbued with a sense of innate poise. In the circumstances, let's mention and linger on one of Montserrat Figueras's solo numbers, the traditional Andalusian cradle song 'Duerme mi niña', in which her voice, delicate yet warm, and wonderfully evocative, is heard to most moving

effect. In its meticulous pacing, consummate artistry and generous aims, 'Mare nostrum' seems a fitting tribute. **Fabrice Fitch**

## 'Modern Times'

Eisler Balladenbuch, Op 18. Galgenlieder Gál Fünf Melodien, Op 33 Goldschmidt Zwei Lieder, Op 27 Grosz Bänkel und Balladen, Op 31 – Bänkel vom Business; Die Ballade vom Seemann Kuttel Daddeldu; Bänkel vom Klatsch; Die Ballade vom Sammy Lee Schreker Das feurige Männlein. Und wie mag die Liebe Korngold Songs of the Clown, Op 29 Zemlinsky Zwölf Lieder, Op 27 – No 6, Der Wind des Herbstes; No 9, Afrikanischer Tanz; No 10, Gib ein Lied mir wieder; No 11, Regenzeit Christian Immler bar Helmut Deutsch pf CAVI-Music © AVI8553229 (66' • DDD)



### From Lieder to cabaret: songs condemned by the Nazis

Christian Immler has long championed the songs of so-called *entartete* ('degenerate') composers forced into exile by the Nazis. He and Helmut Deutsch have here fashioned an enterprisingly eclectic programme ranging in idiom from the (very) late Romanticism of Hans Gál – whose atmospheric Lieder tend to suggest a slimmed-down Richard Strauss – to the cabaret songs of Wilhelm Grosz, with their half-echoes of Kurt Weill and New Orleans jazz. En route we get Korngold's melodically attractive settings from *Twelfth Night* ('Come away, Death', with its Schubertian-Mahlerian equivocations between minor and major, is especially memorable), a clutch of late songs by Zemlinsky that hover on the edge of atonality, and Hanns Eisler in both lyrical and acerbically satirical mode. His 'Ballade von der Krüppelgarde' ('Ballad of the crippled guard') vies with Mahler's 'Revelge' as the most vicious of anti-war songs – though Franz Schreker's demonic-grotesque 'Das feurige Männlein' runs them close.

With his personable high baritone – mellow yet capable of an incisive edge – and keen intelligence, Immler convinces equally in the mystery and inwardness of the Zemlinsky songs (sung in flawless English), the luminous Gál nocturne 'Abend auf dem Fluss' and the mordant ballads of Eisler and Grosz. In the latter he characterises with a sly, acidic wit (I loved his Louis Armstrong moment in Grosz's 'Ballade vom Seemann Kuttel Daddeldu'), without becoming over-knowing. Deutsch, always rhythmically acute, proves an ideal collaborator. Sad, then, to end with a serious gripe: with such rare repertoire, translations are indispensable for non-German speakers. CAVI-Music criminally provides translations neither in the booklet (Erik Levi's excellent note is only partial compensation) nor on their website.

**Richard Wigmore**



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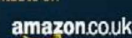
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# Opera



## Philip Clark reviews a new incarnation of Joplin's *Treemonisha*:

*'Benjamin's orchestration fits the music: genteel melodic lines swim like fish through pure water'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 76**



## Mike Ashman reviews *La traviata* from Graz:

*'The voice is ideal for Violetta, true but not creamy, pure without being white or colourless'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 78**

## Donizetti

**Marino Faliero**

**Giorgio Surian** *bass* ..... **Marino Faliero**

**Rachele Stanisci** *sop.* ..... **Elena**

**Ivan Magri** *ten.* ..... **Fernando**

**Luca Grassi** *bar.* ..... **Israele Bertucci**

**Luca Dall'Amico** *bar.* ..... **Steno**

**Leonardo Gramigna** *ten.* ..... **Leoni**

**Chorus and Orchestra of the Bergamo Music Festival**

**Gaetano Donizetti / Bruno Cinquegrani**

Naxos © 2 8 660303/4 (144' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Teatro Donizetti, Bergamo,

October-November 2008

Also available on DVD 2 110616/17



### First modern recording for Donizetti's Delavigne tragedy

A tour of the ducal palace is more or less obligatory for anyone visiting Venice for the first time. In the Hall of the Great Council you will find portraits – mostly imaginary – of the first 76 Doges. But one portrait is missing. In its place is a black veil, on which is written 'Hic est locus Marini Faletri decapitati pro crimibus'. Marino Faliero was executed in 1355 for attempting – in a fiercely republican city – to appoint himself Prince. The Venetians have evidently never forgiven him; but his surname – Falier, in dialect – has, intriguingly, been adopted for the aristocratic father-in-law of Commissario Brunetti in the novels of Donna Leon.

Byron wrote *Marino Faliero* in 1820 – his other Venetian drama formed the basis of Verdi's *I due Foscari* – but Donizetti's opera is based on a tragedy by Casimir Delavigne written in the same year. It was first performed at the Théâtre-Italien in Paris in March 1835, a few weeks after the premiere of Bellini's *I puritani*. The soloists included the so-called *Puritani* quartet: Giulia Grisi, Rubini, Tamburini and Lablache. The opera was well received; in his booklet-note, David Patmore cites Bellini's ungenerous comments. *Marino Faliero* was staged all over Europe and reached New York in 1843 but it was not seen in modern times until its revival in Bergamo in 1966.

And it's from Bergamo that this live recording comes. It is, frankly, pretty

rough-and-ready: a performance that you'd be glad to catch on holiday but one which doesn't really pass muster for repeated listening.

The story is a dark one. The Doge's much-loved nephew, Fernando, is killed in a duel. Faliero and his supporters swear revenge but it all goes wrong; and, while awaiting execution, the Doge learns that Fernando was having an affair with Elena, his wife. After raging, he forgives her and goes to his death. Giorgio Surian sings in forthright fashion but his voice sounds worn and it's impossible to overlook the wobble. The other soloists are adequate at best. The set is certainly worth buying in order to get to know the opera; but let's hope Opera Rara tackles it before long. **Richard Lawrence**

## Joplin

**Treemonisha**

**Anita Johnson** *sop.* ..... **Treemonisha**

**Frank Ward Jnr** *bass-bar.* ..... **Ned**

**AnnMarie Sandy** *mez.* ..... **Monisha**

**Chauncey Packer** *ten.* ..... **Remus**

**Edward Pleasant** *bar.* ..... **Zodetrick**

**Robert Mack** *ten.* ..... **Andy**

**Janinah Burnett** *sop.* ..... **Lucy**

**Darren Stokes** *bass.* ..... **Parson Alltalk; Foreman**

**Todd Payne** *ten.* ..... **Simon**

**Phumzile Sojola** *ten.* ..... **Cephus**

**Frederick Jackson** *bass.* ..... **Luddud**

**Paragon Ragtime Singers and Orchestra /**

**Rick Benjamin**

New World © 2 NW80720 (98' • DDD)



### Rescued and reconstructed: Joplin's only surviving opera

Imagine a parallel universe where the greatest democracy on earth had thought better than to legislate against a fifth of its own people because of their skin colour. Living in Utopia might have allowed Scott Joplin to transcend his typecasting as 'The Ragtime King'; and just perhaps his 1911 opera *Treemonisha* might have been cut the understanding and respect it clearly deserves; and just perhaps a new recording would have been unnecessary.

Too many 'mights' and 'perhapses', I know, but conductor Rick Benjamin's extraordinary booklet essay about his reconstruction of *Treemonisha* tells us how Joplin lived his whole

life based on little more than a wing and a prayer. This set is the culmination of two decades of research, social anthropology and painstaking forensic reconstruction. And I can't think of a more worthwhile task – musical archaeology that needed doing – than rescuing Joplin's sole surviving opera from obscurity and misunderstandings, some well-meaning, others inexplicably stupid and sloppy. Understanding *Treemonisha* is not just about hearing Joplin's achievements in the round; it's about gaining a proper understanding of black culture during that historically nebulous period when jazz was in its baroque infancy.

Benjamin packs nearly 70 pages of densely spaced text (illustrated with evocative sepia photographs, newspaper clips and other period memorabilia) with *Treemonisha*'s painfully convoluted and troubled history: the frustrations, the productions that never happened, the legal wrangles following Joplin's death that led to – and you're not going to believe this – all the original performance materials being casually dumped in the trash can in 1962. Joplin's purpose was, Benjamin thinks, 'to blaze the trail for serious black artistry by providing a vehicle for black performers'.

After listening to Benjamin, the failings of Gunther Schuller's 1975 DG recording become immediately obvious. Schuller's glutinous orchestration is pitched somewhere between *Falstaff* and *Oklahoma!*, with some harmonies discreetly swung 'jazzwards' in a desperate attempt to clinch *Treemonisha* as a proto-*Porgy and Bess*. Benjamin's orchestrations, modelled after a smattering of surviving Joplin orchestrations and period orchestral primers, were made for his own 12-piece Paragon Ragtime Orchestra: one instrument to a part, cornets instead of trumpets, authentic antique percussion instruments.

Using cornets in place of trumpets might seem trifling but the subliminal impact of all Benjamin's attention to various tiny details makes this *Treemonisha* feel instinctively right. Next to *Porgy and Bess*, Joplin's plot – a plantation couple dream about having a child who might teach their community to aspire to better than superstition, and bingo, they find a newborn baby under a tree – is intimate and



small-scale. The couple, Zdzetrick and Monisha, express themselves in rootsy, soulful language; clearly *Treemonisha* was never about the vainglorious spectacle of European 'grand' opera. Benjamin's light-on-its-feet orchestration fits the music: genteel melodic lines swim like fish through pure water.

Voices carry now too, rather than bob along the spray of Schuller's orchestral tempest. Edward Pleasant and AnnMarie Sandy (Zdzetrick and Monisha) banish operatic pomp; Anita Johnson's *Treemonisha* is sincerely felt. The star of the show, though, remains Joplin. For a composer expert in 'closed form' – harmonic ambiguity overrode ragtime's rigid 16-bar phrases to flat-pack the structure into itself – the wonder of *Treemonisha* is Joplin's flair for dramatic trajectory, the intensity of thematic development making his writing spring eternal. This is the most important document about the history of American composed music to have appeared in a long, long time. **Philip Clark**

*Selected comparison:*

Schuller (7/76<sup>8</sup>, 8/92<sup>8</sup>) (DG) 477 5590GOH2

## Puccini



### Tosca

Angela Gheorghiu *sop.*..... **Tosca**  
Roberto Alagna *ten*..... **Cavaradossi**  
Ruggero Raimondi *bar*..... **Scarpia**  
Maurizio Muraro *bass*..... **Angelotti**  
David Cangelosi *ten*..... **Spoletta**  
Enrico Fissore *bass*..... **Sacristan**  
Sorin Coliban *bass*..... **Sciarrone**  
Gwynne Howell *bass*..... **Gaoler**  
James Savage-Hanford *treb*..... **Shepherd Boy**  
Tiffin Children's Choir; Chorus and Orchestra  
of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden /  
Antonio Pappano

Film director **Benoît Jacquot**

Axiom Films © DVD AXM637 (120' + 41' • PAL • 16:9 •  
DTS 5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • S/S)

Includes interviews with Angela Gheorghiu,  
Benoît Jacquot and Antonio Pappano  
From Opus Arte OA0883D (9/03)



### Reissue for Jacquot's studio Tosca movie

When this operatic feature film first arrived 10 years ago, anybody suffering from cynicism about the publicised 'love couple' might have given it a pass. But whatever one thinks of the vocal casting, this opera film is unlike any other.

Visually, it operates on three levels. Most of the opera is shot in full-colour studio circumstances on traditional, atmospheric sets with a film-friendly sparseness, seen through a small but effective vocabulary of shots. Characters are often viewed from overhead, showing them in the context of their particular world and also creating vaguely abstract screen pictures (particularly when the train of

Angela Gheorghiu's dress is arranged just so). Often, entrances aren't made through doors or gates but from a dark netherworld. Close-ups go places that in-performance videos usually do not: after Tosca stabs Scarpia, her safe-passage document in his still-clenched hands effectively dominates the screen, along with her painstaking efforts to prise open his fingers. In the Act 3 Tosca/Cavaradossi duet, the depth of their love is evident in the intimate close-ups between the two singers. Until then, they could well have been a hot power couple. Here, one feels a true bond.

The other two levels are grainier colour footage (possibly shot on location) that glimpse the world through the eyes of key characters. Framing all of this are black-and-white visits to the recording sessions on which the film is based. It all flows together with surprising ease. If nothing else, the visual variety has a practical function: though *Tosca* is Puccini's most dramatically tight opera, pacing can drag by cinematic standards. I'm less sure about other ways Jacquot embraces the medium's artificiality. At times, the voices are heard on the film's soundtrack but the on-screen characters speak their lines.

Ruggero Raimondi's Scarpia is the most assured presence. Though all of the characters find inner resources they didn't know were there, Raimondi shows Scarpia seized by his sexual imperative. Vocally, he's electrifying, and gives extra heat to his admission that Tosca 'makes me forget God' – and what a dimension that adds. Born to sing Mario, Roberto Alagna is also as dashing as one could hope for. But as savvy as Gheorghiu is on stage, she tends to go over the top on screen, with wild gestures and bug eyes. What a pity, since her physical beauty easily registers, even though, in the 10-years-later interview she gives among the 'extras', she seems to disguise herself with a hipster hat and earrings that could double as wind chimes. Vocally, her medium-weight lyric soprano comes across surprisingly well, even in *spinto*-esque passages. Conductor Antonio Pappano encourages more all-around amplitude than one would want in a studio setting. It feels like a shout-fest at times. But these are secondary problems in a cinematic package that warrants repeated viewing.

**David Patrick Stearns**

## A Scarlatti

'Opera Arias'

**Marco Attilio Regolo** – Sinfonia; Voglio a terra; Non la vuoi; Lascia almeno. **Telemaco** – Sinfonia; Già nel seno; Ho il cor tutto foco; Vendetta, vendetta.

**Griselda** – Sinfonia; No, non sospira; Bellezze spietate; Vorresti col tuo pianto. **Tigrane** – Sinfonia; Ma qual cor; Un solo sospiro; Se mai ti punse il cor.

**Carlo re d'Allemagna** – Sinfonia; Quel cor ch'un region serto; Il mio cor costante e fido; Aure voi che sussarando. **Cambise** – Sinfonia; Io parto vincitor;

# IN THE STUDIO

An inside view of who's before the mics and what they're recording

## • HM pianists

Harmonia Mundi spent much of early 2012 recording artists from its piano roster. Paul Lewis was back in the studio laying down the third volume of his Schubert series, to include the Impromptus, D935, *Moments musicaux*, D780, the A minor Sonata, D845, and the *Wandererfantasie*. Meanwhile, Javier Perianes has recorded a selection of Beethoven sonatas: Nos 12, 17, 22 and 27.

## • Denève Debussy

The second volume of Stéphane Denève's cycle of Debussy's complete orchestral works was in its final sessions as we went to press. The Royal Scottish National Orchestra were under the Chandos microphones at Henry Wood Hall in Glasgow, recording *Jeux, Printemps, Nuages, Sirènes* and *Fêtes*. The results will see the light of day later this year.

## • Ticiatti Transfiguration

As we went to press, Robin Ticiatti was in Holland conducting the Rotterdam Philharmonic in a concert that included Strauss's *Tod und Verklärung*. At least one well-known producer appeared to be 'working' at the concert – he tweeted that snow began to fall just as Ticiatti reached Strauss's modulation into C major. We will keep our eyes peeled for a recording.

## • Reger's third fiddle

Coming shortly after the second recent recording of Max Reger's monolithic Violin Concerto, a third performance of the piece has now been recorded. Hannu Lintu conducts violinist Benjamin Schmid and the Philharmonic Orchestra of Tampere, Finland's second city, for a recording on Ondine which will be released in August.



## • Czech Phil Mahler

Eliahu Inbal (above) and the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra have been busy recording Mahler for the Japanese label Exton. We are expecting the Fifth Symphony to arrive on disc any day, while the Seventh will be recorded later this year and is scheduled for an October release.



In quelle luci belle; Mi cinga la fama

**Daniela Barcellona** *mez*

**Concerto de' Cavalieri / Marcello Di Lisa**

Deutsche Harmonia Mundi ④ 88697 84216-2

(66' • DDD)



### Premiere recordings aplenty in Di Lisa's Scarlatti project

The 350th anniversary of Alessandro Scarlatti's birth fell in 2010 but did not receive the fuss that one of the most fascinating Italian Baroque composers deserves. His operas are particularly neglected but Daniela Barcellona and Concerto de' Cavalieri go some way towards remedying this situation. Director Marcello Di Lisa has chosen a fascinating programme of sinfonias and arias from Scarlatti's six last extant serious operas (1716-21), written for the Teatro San Bartolomeo in Naples (*Tigrane*, *Carlo re d'Allemagna* and *Cambise*) and for Rome's Teatro Capranica (*Telemaco*, *Marco Attilio Regolo* and *Griselda*). Most are unpublished and have been edited from manuscript sources; 20 pieces receive world premiere recordings. Mario Marcarini's erudite booklet-note is all too brief and, although the disc contains a PDF of another short note by Di Lisa and all of the sung texts, Sony's presentation of information is haphazard and inconvenient to use.

The music, however, offers plenty of enrichment. Scarlatti's concise yet detailed arias make an impressive impact. Concerto de' Cavalieri's zesty strings and Andrea di Mario's vibrant trumpet obbligato provide a dynamic springboard for Barcellona to launch into 'Voglio a terra' (the villain Amilcare's outburst at imprisoning the title-hero in *Marco Attilio Regolo*) and her coloratura passages are thrilling in 'Vendetta, vendetta' (an enraged trumpet aria sung by Sicoreo, the offended brother of the nymph Calypso in *Telemaco*). Pairs of oboes, trumpets and violins sparkle in the fine sinfonia to *Griselda*; Barcellona's singing and sweet string ritornellos evoke the soft breeze and sensual yearning in Lotario's 'Aure voi che sussarrando' (*Carlo re d'Allemagna*), and dissimilar love arias for different characters in *Tigrane* are performed superbly (the intimate 'Ma qual cor' and obsessively passionate 'Un solo sospiro'). Serious Baroque opera lovers should devour this greedily. **David Vickers**

## Verdi

### La traviata

**Ileana Cotrubas** *sop* ..... **Violetta**  
**Nicolai Gedda** *ten* ..... **Alfredo Germont**  
**Cornell MacNeil** *bar* ..... **Giorgio Germont**  
**Edita Gruberová** *sop* ..... **Flora**  
**Emmy Loose** *sop* ..... **Annina**  
**Kurt Equiluz** *ten* ..... **Gastone**  
**Ernst Gutstein** *bar* ..... **Baron**  
**Harald Pröglhof** *bass-bar* ..... **Marquis**  
**Herbert Lackner** *bass* ..... **Doctor**

**Chorus and Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera /**

**Josef Krips**

Orfeo ④ C816 1121 (123' • ADD)

Recorded live, December 25, 1971

## Verdi

### La traviata

**Marlis Petersen** *sop* ..... **Violetta**  
**Giuseppe Varano** *ten* ..... **Alfredo Germont**  
**James Rutherford** *bar* ..... **Giorgio Germont**  
**Kristina Antonie Fehrs** *mez* ..... **Flora**  
**Fran Lubahn** *sop* ..... **Annina**  
**Taylan Memiöglu** *ten* ..... **Gastone**  
**Ivan Orešćanin** *bar* ..... **Baron**  
**David McShane** *bar* ..... **Marquis**  
**Konstantin Sfiris** *bass* ..... **Doctor**

**Chorus of Graz Opera; Graz Philharmonic Orchestra /**  
**Tecwyn Evans**

Stage director **Peter Konwitschny**

Video director **Myriam Hoyer**

ArtHaus Musik ④ DVD 101 587; ④ Blu-ray 108 036

(110' • 20' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA 5.0,

DTS 5.0 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live at Graz Opera, 2011



### Austrian Traviatas separated by four decades and an aesthetic gulf

One we can see, one we can't – but the 40 years that separate these new releases speak volumes in terms of changing attitudes to Verdi's *Dame aux camélias*. Orfeo has Vienna on a Christmas Day (!) at the start of the 1970s: the booklet champions the production for 'avoiding the danger of filling the stage with ostentatious effects' but the photographs suggest the habitual grand opera gala version, replete with cheated 'period' (ie late-19th-century) designer frocks and over-decorated Paris interiors. The music-making is a little like this too – under Krips wholly un-Italian, grand, noisy and not the last word in ensemble. Cornell MacNeil and Nicolai Gedda contribute star guest spots: the baritone is rather rough; the tenor sometimes abandons his great instinctive tastes in favour of a *verismo* overstatement.

But there is Ileana Cotrubas, her local debut in a role that made her famous. The voice is ideal for Violetta, true but not creamy, pure without being white or colourless. Her emotional understanding of the role treads a fine line of pride, sadness, defiance, self-pity and understanding. With just that extra 'live' frisson that the DG studio recording (3/86<sup>R</sup>) could not have, her performance alone makes this set a valid reissue – but (a problem with many Orfeo opera releases) one that I suspect many collectors will have purchased already in the decades it's been available in hardly inferior sound. Oh, Orfeo are most keen, with extra photos and billing, that we know that the Flora is Edita Gruberová... By comparison, the

Graz version feels like a return to authentic original instrument practices. Director Konwitschny remembers that Verdi wanted the show set in modern dress and that only the Zeffirelli of this world think that Flora's party is a ballet. His production (most carefully designed by Johannes Leiacker) ditches built scenery *in toto*, plays on a forestage area marked out by the house curtains and drapes and concentrates on the often very cruel emotional journey of the three principal characters. Marlis Petersen (recently René Jacobs's Pamina), James Rutherford (Bayreuth's Hans Sachs) and Italian tenor Giuseppe Varano (as a nerdy, specy Alfredo straight out of Brad in *The Rocky Horror Show*) are intensely involved and in good vocal shape. Tecwyn Evans conducts with great rhythmic acuity and finds pace and tension without rushing or becoming unduly loud. The opera plays without interval and the standard cuts are made. An outstanding issue and a quite draining experience.

**Mike Ashman**

## Wagner

### Götterdämmerung

**Deborah Polaski** *sop* ..... **Brünnhilde**  
**Christian Franz** *ten* ..... **Siegfried**  
**John Tomlinson** *bass* ..... **Hagen**  
**Wolfgang Koch** *bar* ..... **Alberich**  
**Robert Bork** *bass-bar* ..... **Gunther**  
**Anna Gabler** *sop* ..... **Gutrune**  
**Petra Lang** *mez* ..... **Waltraute**  
**Ha Young Lee** *sop* ..... **Woglinde**  
**Maria Markina** *mez* ..... **Wellgunde**  
**Ann-Beth Solvang** *mez* ..... **Flosshilde**  
**Deborah Humble** *mez* ..... **First Norn**  
**Cristina Damian** *mez* ..... **Second Norn**  
**Katja Pieweck** *mez* ..... **Third Norn**

**Hamburg Philharmonic Orchestra / Simone Young**

Oehms Classics ④ ④ OC928 (4h 26' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live at the Staatsoper, Hamburg,

October 2010



### Final instalment for Simone Young's Hamburg Ring cycle

As with its predecessors in Hamburg's now complete 2008-10 *Ring*, Simone Young brings to Wagner's textures a constant questioning of received ideas of instrumental balance. Her placing of the *Hauptstimme* in generously scored *tutti*s, not unlike Rudolf Kempe's (see his London and Bayreuth cycles on Testament and Myto), is fresh and original. In this very 'live' final episode, she is at one with her players, intervening interpretatively in the flow of Wagner's melodic argument to a greater degree than previously in the cycle. The more personal, affectionate passages of the Dawn Duet or an emotional Waltraute scene are slowed and quietened to achieve a touching intimacy. And, as before, Young is no cosseter of purple passages: set pieces such as the





Emotionally up-front: Peter Konwitschny's *La traviata* from Graz

Funeral March or Hagen's assembly of the vassals in Act 2 (taken swiftly) always serve the stage drama rather than becoming time out for purely orchestral display.

The cast is headed by veterans. Polaski's Brünnhilde and Tomlinson's Hagen (and, of course, his Wotan) have been leading world casts since the 1990s, an experience which shows in their working of Wagner's text. Tomlinson in particular takes Hagen into areas several layers above mere black villainy. Franz is a brave and enthusiastic actor of Siegfried's moods; Lang makes much of Waltraute's emotional blackmail of Brünnhilde; Bork (intentionally blustery) and Gabler are colourful Gibichungs. Like last year's *Siegfried* (A/11), this is first and foremost an excited, committed performance with its own logic.

An astonishing 48 rival versions of the opera have, to date, been issued on 'official' CD labels (counting 'dealer' issues and substantial excerpts would take this number to over a hundred). A first choice is impossible but don't miss live performances from two other eras: the Clemens Krauss (1953, preferably via Pristine) or the Barenboim (1991). The new Young set partners this company well. **Mike Ashman**

*Selected comparisons:*

*Bayreuth Fest Op, Krauss, 1953 (6/04<sup>th</sup>) (PRIS) PACO039/42*

*Bayreuth Fest Op, Barenboim, 1991/92*

(9/05) (TELD) 2564 67714-0

*Royal Op, Kempe, 1957 (8/08) (TEST) SBT13 1426*

*Bayreuth Fest Op, Kempe, 1960 (MYTO) MCD00270/73*

## 'Luciano Pavarotti'



A film by **Esther Schapira**

EuroArts (E) DVD 205 8918 (58' + 35' • NTSC • 16:9 • PCM stereo • O • S)

Includes interviews with Bono, José Carreras, Herbert Breslin and Joseph Volpe



### Esther Schapira's documentary on the life of a global legend

When he died in 2007, Luciano Pavarotti left an estate worth in excess, it is said, of \$474 million. It reflects the global phenomenon that he had become, far more than being the most celebrated tenor since Caruso. Pavarotti was one of the most famous men on the planet. Even those who knew nothing and cared less about opera recognised – and warmed to – the bloke who sang that song for the World Cup.

This film portrait, while providing a routine canter though his career (it's especially good on his early years), is less concerned with the music than the offstage life. The film crew has been to all the relevant locations and had access to

various Pavarotti properties. But, while there is fascinating footage of an early Rodolfo in Modena (with his childhood friend Mirella Freni), there are no scenes from anything at Covent Garden or the Met. A clip from the first Three Tenors concert is as close as we get to the operatic stage. There is no Domingo to pay tribute but there is Carreras and Pavarotti's erstwhile manager of 35 years, Herbert Breslin. Most notably, there is Pavarotti's long-suffering first wife Adua, whose (less than adulatory) contributions to the film were made on condition that there would be none from her successor. Most irritatingly – what is it, the silly shades or the faux philosopher? – there is Pavarotti's rock-star friend Bono on hand to dispense words of wisdom.

Yet the whole thing, well sourced, briskly edited and judiciously paced, is an engaging, easy-listening kind of watch, neither hagiography nor hatchet job. Future Pavarotti documentaries will doubtless ask more penetrating questions, and those hoping for a serious look at his operatic career – the range, the roles, the high and lows – will be disappointed, but as a portrait of a man who loved food and women just as much as he did music, it's an accomplished piece of work.

**Jeremy Nicholas**



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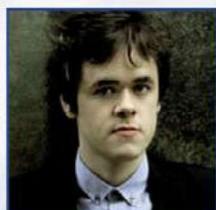


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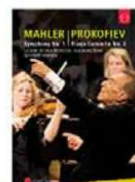
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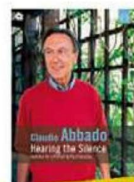
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## OPERA AT THE VANGUARD

Contemporary opera is thriving and increasingly making it on to disc.  
**Richard Whitehouse** listens to newly minted recordings of new works



José 'Pepe' Martínez's *Cruzar la cara de la luna* at Houston Grand Opera, 2010

There can be little doubt that opera is now the dominant genre in contemporary music on either side of the Atlantic, with new works commissioned on a regular basis, and not only in the main urban centres. The range and type of operas to be heard are as varied as the genre can ever have been – from lavish full-scale stagings right down to the smallest and most mobile studio productions. That diversity is certainly evident in the works considered here.

Laurent Petitgirard's *Guru* (2009) is the nearest we have to 'grand' opera, with its half-dozen major roles and a six-strong vocal ensemble together with chorus and orchestra. Petitgirard had a notable success with his first opera, *Joseph Merrick, the Elephant Man*, and this work exhibits similar influences drawn primarily from early and mid-20th-century French music. The subject of cults and their pernicious effect is of no mean relevance, yet a lack of variety in dramatic pacing and content means that, shorn of its visual component, the piece leaves too uniform an impression. A fine

showing from Hubert Claessens in the title-role as well as assured direction by the composer cannot quite compensate.

On a not dissimilar scale, Robert Saxton's *The Wandering Jew* (2009) was written for broadcast on BBC Radio 3. A decade in the making, Saxton's piece – to his own

*'An opera which can take its place in that remarkable lineage of dramatic monologues stemming from Schoenberg's Erwartung'*

libretto inspired but not beholden to Stefan Heym's eponymous novel – sees the main character as an Everyman whose trials and tribulations encapsulate the 'human condition' over two millennia. Musically, it draws on the productive synthesis of tonal and serial elements Saxton has pursued in his more recent work. Roderick Williams identifies fully with the demanding title-role and the one proviso is the narrative overlay occasioned by the medium – making a staged presentation the more necessary. Of the two

smaller-scale operas, José 'Pepe' Martínez's *Cruzar la cara de la luna* ('To Cross the Face of the Moon', 2010) was commissioned by Houston Grand Opera to provide a platform for the city's Hispanic population. Martínez is most renowned for his work with mariachi bands, and the Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán dominates the score with its alternately vibrant and soulful presence. Dramatically the work unfolds as a continual sequence of arias and ensembles, revealing a story of estrangement then reunion that is little more than a framework for the musical numbers. David Hanlon directs with appreciation of the idiom in a never less than enjoyable recording.

At the opposite end of the aesthetic spectrum, *Luci mie traditrici* ('The Deadly Flower', 1998) is another of Salvatore Sciarrino's chamber operas in which a nominally familiar subject is rendered from a highly distinct angle. Here it is the tragedy of Carlo Gesualdo and his wife, who was brutally murdered for her alleged adultery – which the composer evokes (rather than relating as such) via eight scenes in which the fractured exchanges of the main protagonists, heard against an instrumental backdrop of nuanced intricacy, outline the narrative in all its claustrophobic intensity. Christian Miedl and Nina Tarandek meet their exacting requirements head-on, while the playing of Ensemble Algoritmo under Marco Angius leaves little to chance.

Anything other than a DVD presentation would be unfeasible in the case of Michel van der Aa's *One* (2002) – described as a 'chamber opera for singer and video', which can take its place in that remarkable lineage of dramatic monologues stemming from Schoenberg's *Erwartung*. Here, too, is a woman literally and emotionally 'in the dark', confronted variously by images of herself and other women throughout a score which integrates its sonic, scenic and visual components with a precision and poise the composer has made his own during the past decade. Barbara Hannigan's mesmeric assumption reaffirms why she is among the most highly regarded exponents of new music, while Van der Aa handles stage and video direction with a finely honed virtuosity. 'Total theatre' at its most provocative, and a significant instance of where contemporary opera is headed. **G**

## THE RECORDINGS



**Petitgirard**  
*Guru*  
 Hungarian SO /  
 Petitgirard  
 Naxos © ②  
 8 660300/01



**Saxton**  
*The Wandering Jew*  
 BBC Singers,  
 BBC SO /  
 de Ridder  
 NMC © ② NMC170



**Martínez**  
*Cruzar la cara  
 de la luna*  
 Houston Grand Op /  
 Hanlon  
 Albany © TROY299



**Sciarrino**  
*Luci mie traditrici*  
 Ens Algoritmo/  
 Angius  
 Stradivarius  
 © STR33900



**Van der Aa**  
*One*  
 Barbara Hannigan  
 (sop), et al  
 Disquiet Media  
 © DVD DQM03



# Books



## David Gutman reviews a Finnish biography of Sibelius:

*'Mäkelä wants to take Sibelius out of his reductive "Finnish" context and reposition him in a fin de siècle intellectual mainstream'*



## Peter Dickinson on a study of one of America's great symphonists:

*'The astonishing thing is that, with everything else going on, Schuman went on composing before facing a gruelling day at the office'*

## Jean Sibelius

By Tomi Mäkelä

Boydell Press, HB, 536pp, £50

ISBN 978-1-84383-688-9



Is it worth persevering with this substantial study, first published in German by

a Finnish academic to mark the 50th anniversary of the composer's death? Since its arguments have been rendered into rather clunky English and Tomi Mäkelä's line of thought is not always clear, you'd need to be a diehard Sibelian to stick with it, for all the excellence of the book's physical production. The main thrust seems clear enough: Mäkelä wants to take Sibelius out of his reductive 'Finnish' context and reposition the life and works in a *fin de siècle* intellectual mainstream.

Part of this is achieved by a sleight of hand whereby 'modernism' in music is redefined, pulled away from narrower Schoenbergian moorings to embrace symbolism, surrealism and the areas in which north European painters and dramatists make the strongest showing. Placing Ferruccio Busoni centre stage does throw a rather different light on the supposed peripherality of Sibelius – and Nielsen too. The rebuff to Theodor Adorno is perhaps designed primarily for German consumption. Not that Mäkelä's very different conclusions would necessarily have been any more intelligible to Sibelius and his circle. This is the kind of commentator who enjoys looking at *Kullervo* as 'a surreal link between *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Le sacre du printemps*'.

Also there for the debunking is a more literal kind of 'Finnish' mask. Had Sibelius passed away in his early sixties, 30 years before his actual death in 1957, we would be considering much the same body of music without the kind of ideologically constructed, indubitably masculine image that adorns the book jacket. As with Alma vis-à-vis Gustav Mahler, so Aino Sibelius (née Järnefelt) is seen to have promoted the kind of great composer husband persona that satisfied her own needs. Of mixed parentage but an ardent

supporter of exclusivist Finnish language and culture, her reclusive shaven-headed Finnish colossus was, or had been, a multilingual semi-alcoholic bohemian cosmopolite whose diary entries and primary means of spoken communication remained Swedish throughout his life. But then even Swedish has been a barrier to scholarly outsiders. Though presenting less formidable a challenge than the Finnish language, it too has contributed to the perception of Sibelius as an isolated figure, whatever the innate characteristics of a style in which, as Mäkelä reminds us, neo-Hellenistic Classical sources of inspiration jostle with unarguably Finnish ones.

Mäkelä also shows how the human and the erotic mattered to Sibelius, whatever the precise nature of his response to politics or the natural world. He is tirelessly sceptical about the landscape metaphors in Sibelius's own writings, and the Romantic idea of the 'Voice of the North' is for him a distorting mirror that has warped Sibelius's reception history. In his view, the 1890s were the crucial years, 'both ethically and aesthetically' shaping the entire oeuvre.

Lots of food for thought, then. But the project is neither life story nor conventional musical treatise, a sort of intellectual biography of reception and transmission. It is structured in seven deliberately kaleidoscopic chapters with copious explanatory material, listings and 'ographies placed fore and aft. The balder language in this peripheral matter throws up some mistakes. The contextual chronology provides an inevitably personal selection of salient markers but why is Peter Maxwell Davies credited with three symphonies on page xxv? On page xxvi we are told that the Vienna Philharmonic did not perform Sibelius's Fourth until 1970. That gaffe had the benefit of sending me back to Lorin Maazel's 1968 Decca recording and it was intriguing to find it sounding so bullish and extrovert, rather more 'Romantic' and 'National' in tone than we would nowadays expect.

Then again, let's not forget Esa-Pekka Salonen's self-deprecating dream in which 'composer Magnus Lindberg's little daughter said, "Your generation doesn't understand

Sibelius. You think his music is a process, but it isn't." I woke up in a cold sweat...I guess that's the way it is. Every generation discovers its own Sibelius. We did away with nostalgic national romanticism and focused on the deep processes that underlie the surface of Sibelius's music. Our generation thought that Adorno and company were wrong in branding Sibelius a poor composer because his music was so conventional on the surface. We wanted to show that new and exciting things were happening just under the surface. That has been our message. Soon the next generation will pour theirs down our throats.'

Mäkelä's revisionism has its limits. Even if you agree that Sibelius was anything but a naive man of the forest, his Finnishness little more than a façade, his wife a borderline fascist etc, etc, it is not obvious to me that we are obliged to ditch altogether the familiar Nordic archetype. Sibelius the man may have found it difficult to bring his Eighth Symphony to fruition in intellectual isolation but without the presence of that mythic icon, Finland's sense of self might be quite different today, deprived of what has turned out to be a thoroughly internationalist commitment to music-making of all kinds.

David Gutman

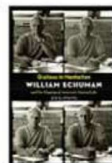
## Orpheus in Manhattan

William Schuman and the Shaping of America's Musical Life

By Steve Swayne

Oxford UP, HB, 752pp, £27.50

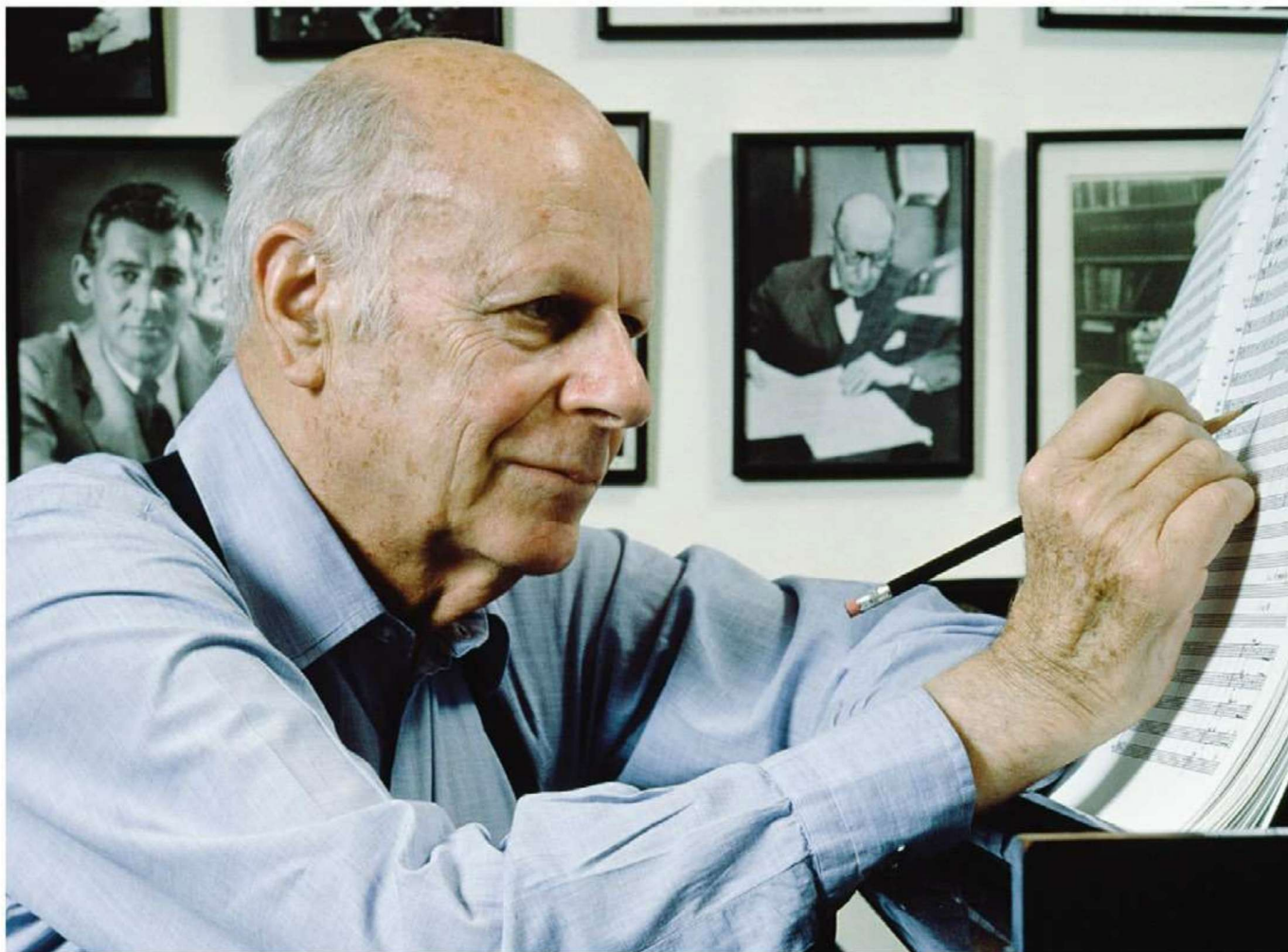
ISBN 978-0-19-538852-7



Why is the music of William Schuman not better known?

Perhaps because, unlike his near contemporaries, he had no *Rhapsody in Blue*, *Appalachian Spring* or *West Side Story*. It would be ironic if he was remembered for his witty orchestration of the organ work *Variations on 'America'* that Charles Ives wrote in his teens. Ironic because, along with Samuel Barber, Schuman didn't like Ives and, by Schuman's criteria, Ives was not





An American multi-tasker: William Schuman, composer, administrator, populariser of his country's contemporary music

a professional. Schuman's name has been confusing: a couple were overheard leaving a concert and she asked if that was really the German Romantic composer Robert Schumann; he'd gone mad in later life, the husband explained.

Schuman's family were German-Jewish immigrants, arriving in the later 19th century, but he was brought up in New York. He played the violin, clarinet, bass and banjo; wrote pop songs, some with Frank Loesser (no less), which he sang; then, after a concert, he realised he wanted to be a composer, although he always recognised that he needed to do other things too.

Schuman was a visionary whose ideas impacted fruitfully at Sarah Lawrence College, where he taught and created a choir that became famous. While there he gained the first Pulitzer Prize for music; and during the war years he was regarded as perhaps the most representative American serious composer, with his hard-edged symphonies symbolising the glories of the American war effort. Then, from 1945 to 1961, he was president of the Juilliard School of

Music, where he introduced the Literature and Materials of Music programme, taught by composers. Schuman founded the Juilliard Quartet and established the Dance department, and the orchestra toured Europe. The climax of Schuman's administrative career came when he was appointed director of Lincoln Center, a post he held until 1968. While there he established the Chamber Music Society and the Film Society, and brought many organisations together on to the new site, now claimed as the world's largest performing arts complex, with 29 separate performance venues. Although he was an entrepreneur of genius, he failed to balance the books, which led to his downfall. In some ways he can be compared to William Glock at the BBC, where one man could stamp his personality on the programme of an entire organisation.

Like Copland, Schuman always worked generously on behalf of American music and its composers. He instigated the massive Recorded Anthology of American Music (later New World Records), supported by

the Rockefeller Foundation, which enabled hundreds of works to be recorded for the first time.

There have been previous books about Schuman, notably by Joseph W Polisi (*American Muse*; Amadeus Press: 2008), who was next but one to Schuman as president of Juilliard and a personal friend. Swayne's study, a comparable doorstopper, is incredibly detailed and has the longest list of acknowledgements I have ever seen. He tells the story of the whole career and, as the Lincoln Center dramas unfold, it feels like a thriller. The astonishing thing is that, with everything else going on, Schuman went on composing, getting up early in the morning before facing a gruelling day at the office.

Swayne offers little about international perceptions of Schuman's music, which has long had a UK following: he was *Composer of the Week* on BBC Radio 3 last October. But this book brilliantly penetrates through to the tough soul of America's symphonist and is documented with 100 pages of notes and a bibliography. **Peter Dickinson**



# REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of reissues and archive recordings

## Maestros in contrast

Bruckner from Günter Wand and Hans Knappertsbusch • Wagner from Toscanini

Just 10 years after his death, **Günter Wand**, who was so handsomely commemorated in last month's Icons by Michael McManus, continues to grace new release sheets via valuable, previously unpublished broadcast recordings. Profil's Wand legacy is already fairly sizeable and its latest set with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin is instructive on at least two counts, repertoire-wise. The first involves Tchaikovsky, a Fifth Symphony from 1987 and a *Pathétique* from the following year, which are as different from each other as could be imagined – the Fifth worthy, straightforward and temperamentally neutral, the Sixth a cauldron of heated emotion, with lacerating climaxes in the first movement, a bracing march *scherzo* and a full-hearted finale. Wand's *Pictures at an Exhibition* (1995) acts as a powerful antidote to the popular notion that Ravel's orchestration only really works when colour contrasts are maximised: here the magic is coaxed

‘Wand is a master in attendance who prefers to facilitate the composer's plain speaking’

into life rather than crudely underlined, the culminating ‘Great Gate’ properly majestic, with a prominent bell and a mushrooming tam-tam. Stravinsky's *Firebird* Suite (1987) enjoys an unusual level of clarity (the woodwinds come off especially well), though never at the expense of essential atmosphere. I was interested that Beethoven's Fifth and Sixth Symphonies are presented twice, first tethered to generous rehearsal sequences (1992), then as performed again two years later. Wand's consistency, in terms both of mood and of tempo, is remarkable; in fact, lacking documentation at the time, it took me some while to-ing and fro-ing between the two sets of performances to establish that

they were actually different. The impression throughout, and again in Haydn's Symphony No 76 (1995), Mozart's 40th (1988) and his *Serenata notturna* (1995), is of a master in attendance who, rather than impose an outsize interpretative will on his players, prefers to facilitate the composer's plain speaking. This he does with consummate skill, though in Bruckner's Sixth (1995) and, more especially, his Eighth (1994) – the finale particularly – some of Wand's tempo relations emerge as a little restless.

The overall conceptions are characteristically noble, structure-conscious and clear-sighted (the Eighth's coda is truly breathtaking) but, turning to **Hans Knappertsbusch** with the Berlin Philharmonic in 1951, newly reissued on Music & Arts (using the controversial 1892 Bruckner/Schalk version – Wand uses the widely accepted 1884-90 Haas edition), the older conductor's more fluent and occasionally more excitable approach is immediately apparent. Knappertsbusch's storm-tossed performance comes as part of a revised version of an early Music & Arts set (CD1028) which now includes a version of the Third with the Bavarian State Orchestra from October 1954, rather than a 1962 recording with the North German Radio Symphony Orchestra, which featured in the earlier collection. It's a good choice, especially the polka second subject of the finale, where Knappertsbusch encourages the brass to play with great warmth. The other recordings included are of the Fourth (BPO, 1944), the Fifth (Munich PO, 1959), the Seventh (VPO, Salzburg, 1949) and the Ninth (BPO, 1950), with a supplement of sympathetically performed excerpts from Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* (purely orchestral, Berlin State Opera Orchestra, 1959), *Siegfried* Act 2 scene 2 (Bernd Aldenhoff, Otto von Rohr, Munich, 1952) and *Die Walküre* Act 1 scene 3 (Maud Cunitz, Aldenhoff, Munich, 1952).

Knappertsbusch's Bruckner has neither the temperance of Wand nor the temperament of Furtwängler but follows a ruggedly elevated course located somewhere between the two.

As to Wagner, I cannot let a new double disc from the Opus Kura label pass without comment, as it usefully gathers together all **Arturo Toscanini**'s 1940s Wagner 78s with the NBC Symphony Orchestra. Best is the *Faust Overture* (possibly its most impressive recording ever) and a recording of Brünnhilde's Immolation with Helen Traubel on brilliant form, where Toscanini's iron grip on each successive musical paragraph, allied to his expertise at gauging climaxes, is truly second to none. The transfers (direct from Victor 78s) are very good given the limitation of the source material, and I can't think of any other recorded version of the opera's closing 20 minutes that suggests such a humbling conflagration.

### THE RECORDINGS



**Various Cpsrs** Orch Wks (r1987-95)  
**DSO Berlin / Wand**  
Profil Ⓟ Ⓢ PH10046



**Bruckner. Wagner** Orch Wks  
(r1944-59) **Knappertsbusch**  
Music & Arts Ⓢ Ⓢ CD-1256



**Wagner** Faust Ov. Op excs (r1940s)  
**NBC SO / Toscanini**  
Opus Kura Ⓢ Ⓢ OPK2096/7

## Rabin treasures newly discovered

The ways of the record companies are often swathed in mystery. Take the 1961 violin recital that Capitol taped with Michael Rabin at the height of his powers, with Heifetz's accompanist Brooks Smith at the piano. You would have thought that with a



much-lauded LP volume of Rabin 'Mosaics' behind it, Capitol would have been eager to issue a second; but, no, it's only now that the ever-enterprising Testament label has been in a position to come to Rabin's posthumous rescue. The repertoire is characteristic: Sarasate, Chopin, Wieniawski, Kreisler, Falla, Dvořák and so on, all despatched with a full, silken tone and typical agility. But, fine as these 'encores' are, the real highlights of this historically significant set lie elsewhere. First, there are recital recordings that the 11-year-old Rabin made with his father as accompanist, including Lalo's *Symphonie espagnole* and some Paganini Caprices, the playing style already securely focused, the approach confident, forthright and emotionally candid. Then there are the later tapes, including John Alden Carpenter's attractive Violin Sonata with pianist Grant Johannesen and, most important, full performances of Brahms's Concerto and (uncut) Bruch's *Scottish Fantasy* with the San Diego Symphony under Zoltán Rozsnyai, recorded live less than a year before the violinist's untimely death at the age of 35. Rabin's serene handling of the second subject in the first movement of the Brahms is a miracle to behold and a sure sign of a talent that would have blossomed even further had he lived long enough to deliver. A tragedy indeed, but it's a privilege to have access to the evidence.

### THE RECORDINGS



**Various Cpsrs** Unpubd Recs, 1947-71  
**Rabin**  
Testament (M) ③ SBT3 1470

### Mischa Elman: first-time releases

Nothing could be further removed from Michael Rabin's svelte, flowing bow strokes than the quietly sobbing 'old world' style of Mischa Elman as captured in a pair of BBC radio recitals, both dating from the year Rabin taped his previously unissued encores for Capitol. I can remember hearing at least one of these recitals rebroadcast years ago and was struck then, as now, by the sweetness and subtlety of Elman's playing. Beethoven's *Spring* Sonata provides an interesting point of comparison with Elman's 1955 Decca recording (on Testament SBT4 1344, again with Josef Seiger), which, although just as beautiful in its way, sounds rather more studied. This later version has a greater degree of light and shade, and provides an additional bonus in that Elman plays the first-movement repeat, which he doesn't on the Decca option. Another highlight of the set is Brahms's First Violin Sonata, which usefully supplements earlier recordings of the Second and Third Sonatas



Untimely death: Michael Rabin recorded the Brahms Concerto less than a year before he died at 35

that are included in the previous Testament sonata set. Here Elman employs subtle dynamic contrasts, his vibrato reacting according to the dictates of the musical moment (including that unmistakable sobbing 'beat'), his slides expressive but never too conspicuous, his intonation mostly spot on. A solo Bach Gavotte provides a rare but charming cameo of Elman in the genre, and there are soft-centred versions of Handel and Vitali, as well as familiar encores. To say that 'they don't make them like that any more' is an understatement, one that seems the more regrettable the further we sail from what was without question a golden era of violin-playing.

### THE RECORDINGS



**Various Cpsrs** BBC Radio Recitals  
(1961) **Elman**  
Testament (M) ② SBT2 1475

### Symphonies from Santa Cecilia

Antonio Pappano's wonderful work with **Orchestra of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia** has focused enough attention on a fine band of players to make their own well-annotated eight-CD retrospective (1937-2010) more appealing to a wider public than it might otherwise have been. Some of the material included has already appeared on disc elsewhere. Bernardino Molinari's wartime 78s of Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*, the work's first-ever recording, isn't a patch on Louis Kaufman's New York set

from a few years later but it's of obvious historic interest. Molinari also conducts Debussy (*Prélude à L'après-midi d'un faune* and 'Nuages' from *Nocturnes*), while there's an exciting version of Verdi's *I Vespri siciliani* Overture from the Vatican under Victor de Sabata, who also directs a remarkable (though indifferently recorded) account of Wagner's *Parsifal* Prelude, as well as Stravinsky's *Fireworks*, excerpts from Ravel's *Ma Mère l'Oye* (unaccountably leaving out the 'Fairy Garden') and a Rome recording of *La mer* where the central 'Play of the Waves' has both expressive force and immense sweep. There are performances under Franco Ferrara (Beethoven's Eighth), Willy Ferrero (Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* with pianist Armando Trovajoli), Wolfgang Sawallisch (Spontini), Fernando Previtali (Casella, Petrassi, Respighi), Rossini overtures under Barbirolli and Cantelli, Giulini conducting Cherubini's Requiem in C, Markevitch in Dallapiccola's *Canti di prigionia* (good to have in this Markevitch centenary year), an interesting Tchaikovsky Fifth under Sinopoli, a rather less impressive Brahms First under Daniele Gatti, fine digital versions of Brahms's Third and Fourth under Prêtre and Chung respectively, and Pappano conducting a vigorous Beethoven Fifth and more. **G**

### THE RECORDINGS



**Various Cpsrs** Orch Wks (1937-2010)  
**Orch of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia**

⑤ ⑧ Available directly from the orchestra at [santacecilia.it](http://santacecilia.it)



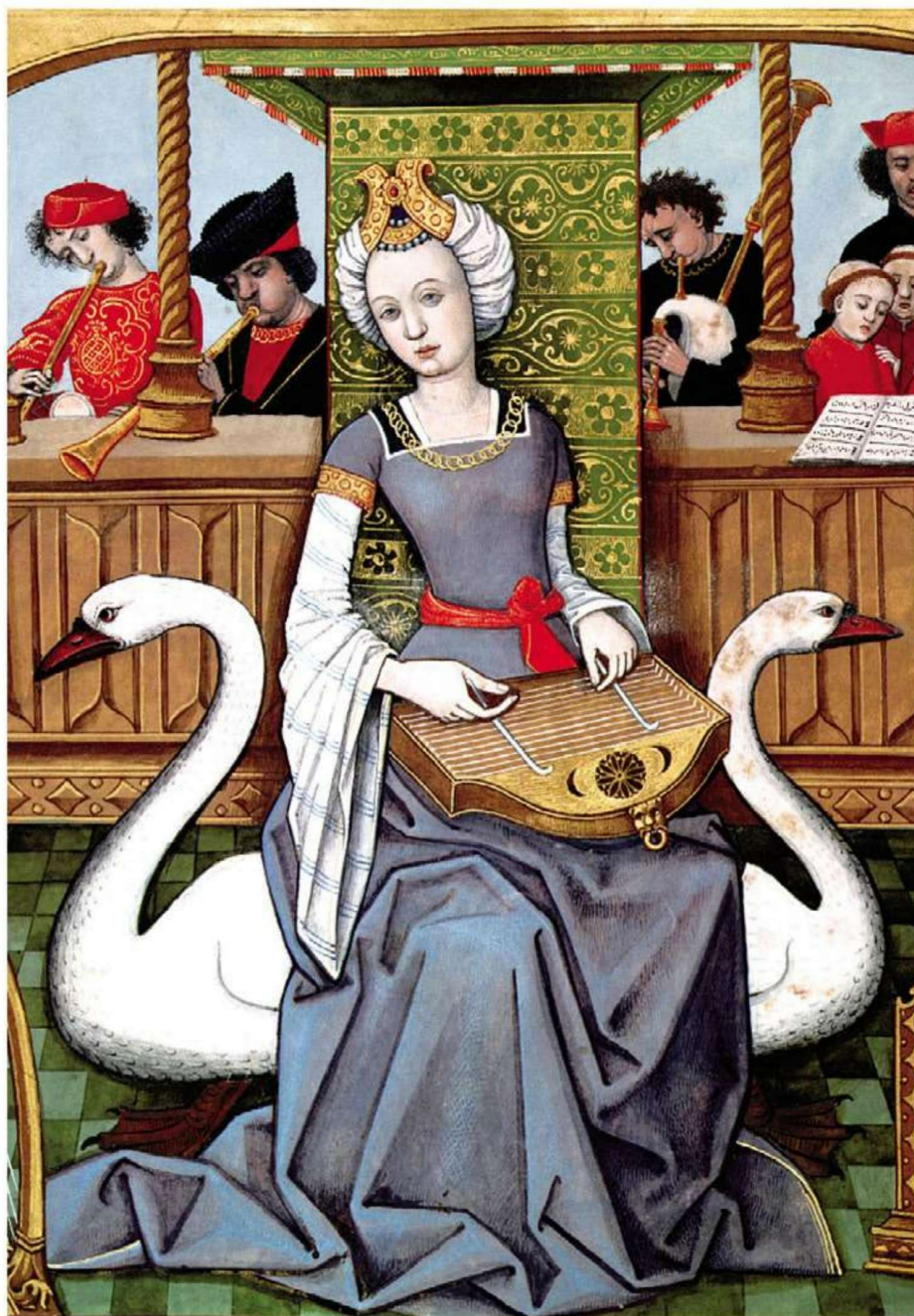
# THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE TO...

## *Renaissance French chanson*

Fabrice Fitch discusses the myriad genres of this often-neglected art form, including the 'Parisian' chanson and the air de cour, and how they are best represented on disc

No history of French song would be complete without reference to the Renaissance. In fact, the poetic forms used by 15th-century composers date back to Machaut and even earlier, but by the turn of the 16th century these were being superseded by the strophic forms favoured by Sermisy and Janequin. The latter is still rightly famous for his descriptive chansons, depicting everything from birds and battles to the thrill of the chase and the chatter of gossipy housewives. The so-called Parisian chanson reaches its apex with that most protean of Renaissance composers, Lasso, for whom French was the language of his most intimate thoughts and personal expression. Stretching the definition of the Renaissance just slightly allows me to include that self-consciously elegant, quintessentially French genre, the *air de cour*. Throughout the period, the stereotypical courtly love lyric sits alongside more wordly, even louche subject matters that song repertoire in later periods tends to avoid: here, truly, is the full range of human experience.

My choice is partly dictated by necessity: for the 15th century especially, swathes of the discography are currently unavailable, while other repertoire remains virgin territory. There's still no single disc devoted to the songs of one of the greatest chanson composers, Busnois, and no entirely satisfactory song recital even for Josquin. Finally, I've listed the recordings roughly in reverse chronological order, because my first pick is one of the earliest, and because all the recordings here are worth hearing. Consider this selection a starting point: most recordings by these artists merit further exploration. **G**



'Allegory of Music' from 'Les echecs amoureux' by an unnamed 16th-century artist from the French School





**10** *Amour, amours*  
Virgin © 545458-2 (3/02)  
Chanson anthologies covering the entire Renaissance are surprisingly thin on the ground.

This is probably the widest-ranging, spanning from Ockeghem to Le Jeune. Though the performances are more uneven than those on this ensemble's Binchois disc, this recital takes in a number of minor figures well worthy of inclusion. Incidentally, another anthology by the Scholars of London for Naxos (2/95), albeit covering a slightly narrower range, is also worth seeking out.

Ensemble Gilles Binchois / Dominique Vellard



**9** *Pierre Guédron: Le concert des consorts*  
Alpha © ALPHAO19 (A/02)  
Pierre Guédron has been described as one of France's

finest song composers. He embodies both the most refined and the most playful facets of the *air de cour*, and this disc has one infectiously addictive melody after another, and more besides. Le Poème Harmonique have done for this repertoire what the Ensemble Clément Janequin did for the earlier chanson, and in Claire Lefilliâtre they can boast a truly charismatic lead.

Le Poème Harmonique / Vincent Dumestre



**8** *Airs de cour*  
Linn © CKD089 (9/99)  
The *air de cour* is the extension of the Parisian chanson and takes us into the 17th century.

This disc updates (but doesn't supersede) Nigel Rogers's superb anthology for EMI Reflexe. Ably accompanied by Jacob Heringman, Catherine King and Charles Daniels distinguish themselves as soloists (Daniels is particularly fine in Moulié's 'Enfin la beauté que j'adore') and combine in some charming duos. Catherine King *mez* Charles Daniels *ten* Jacob Heringman *lto*



**7** *Lassus: Chansons*  
Harmonia Mundi  
© HMA195 1391 (2/93R)  
The Clément Janequins excel in this selection of Lassus's

French songs and Italian madrigals. In the latter, a sense of theatre has the upper hand, but the composer's French songs offer the more rounded experience, from the smut of 'En un chateau' to the sublime profundity of 'La nuit froide et sombre'. Another anthology from the King's Singers (EMI, 11/98\*) is worth a mention but Visse and co have the edge here.

Ensemble Clément Janequin / Dominique Visse



**6** *Les cris de Paris*  
Harmonia Mundi  
© HMA195 1072 (4/82R)  
The Janequins changed the way we hear Parisian chansons

and this is one of those early recordings that established the ensemble's reputation. It includes two of Janequin's descriptive tableaux and some classic expressions of the chanson from his contemporary Sermisy. Look out, too, for the ensemble's anthologies devoted to their namesake, 'La chasse' (9/88\*) and 'Le chant des oyseaulx' (8/85\*), and for 'Fricassée Parisienne' as well.

Ensemble Clément Janequin / Dominique Visse



**5** *Renaissance: Josquin Desprez*  
RCA Victor © 09026 61814-2  
Josquin's songs haven't yet received the focused

attention they clearly deserve but this recital from the King's Singers, focusing especially on the later pieces, will do for the moment. It's not ideal, as the acoustic lacks bloom or warmth, and the first track - the motet *Benedicta es* - is distinctly ropy. But don't be put off, for though it's a little strait-laced, there's some fine singing here.

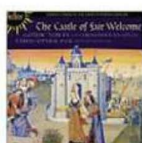
The King's Singers



**4** *Ockeghem & Compère: Musiques au temps d'Anne de France*  
Ligia Digital © LIDIO202217-10  
Now a wild card from a little-

known ensemble on a small record label. La Main Harmonique is led by Frédéric Bétous and includes instruments, but sensibly and well. The voices frequently excel in songs by Agricola, Compère and especially Ockeghem (a pity they didn't use my edition of 'Mort, tu as navré', though!). In a repertoire that's woefully under-represented, this really is worth seeking out.

La Main Harmonique / Frédéric Bétous



**3** *The Castle of Fair Welcome*  
Hyperion © CDH55274 (11/86\*)  
Gothic Voices' adoption of an all-vocal line-up for song repertoire

was controversial when this recital was first issued but it proved enormously influential. A generation later, they may be said to have won the argument, though subsequent ensembles have possibly preferred a more relaxed approach. But if for no other reason, the disc is worth hearing for the pitilessly objective reading of that heart-rending masterpiece, Binchois's 'Dueil angoisseux'.

Gothic Voices / Christopher Page



**2** *Binchois & Lescurel: Chansons*  
Virgin Classics © 349973-2  
There's a strong case for regarding Binchois as the most

influential song composer in the early Renaissance. Less extrovert than his direct contemporary Dufay, he excels in ambiguity and so brings out the subtleties of poetic texts that until quite recently were considered overly formulaic. This anthology includes the incomparable mezzo Susanne Norin, who's always worth hearing in this repertoire, as is the soprano Anne-Marie Lablaude.

Ensemble Gilles Binchois / Dominique Vellard

# **1** *Le Chansonnier Cordiforme*

Decca Eloquence © 480 1819 (2/11)



More than 30 years on from its original release, this recent reissue remains required listening. It's the only complete recording of an entire songbook - in this case, a heart-shaped manuscript compiled for a mid-15th-century cleric of exquisite taste and dubious morals - which contains a high proportion of the period's most famous songs. In many cases, the performances remain unsurpassed. That's hardly surprising with a cast that includes Emma Kirkby, Margaret Philpot, John Elwes and David Thomas among the singers, and Anthony Rooley and Christopher Page among the instrumentalists. You might overlook this among the single-composer anthologies, so this is my first choice.

The Consort of Musicke / Anthony Rooley



Visit the Gramophone Player at [gramophone.co.uk](http://gramophone.co.uk) to sample an excerpt from Fabrice Fitch's top choice, *Le Chansonnier Cordiforme*

## ARE YOU A SPECIALIST?

Share your recommendations for great recordings of Renaissance French chanson on our forum by visiting [gramophone.co.uk](http://gramophone.co.uk) or suggest recordings of **Beethoven transcriptions**, the subject of next issue's specialist, Philip Clark.





# THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

## *Glorious yet troubled: Brahms's most personal symphony*

Brahms declined to reveal the inner meaning of his Third Symphony, but there are clues in the music. The way these are interpreted on record varies greatly depending on the conductor, finds **Richard Osborne**

**I**t is enormously rewarding – one of the world's grandest bracers. What a lift in those themes, and what tenderness beneath their power! Brahms for ever!

So wrote WR Anderson in *Gramophone* in September 1935 at the end of a survey during which he had struggled to decide whether **Leopold Stokowski** or **Willem Mengelberg** had his vote in Brahms's Third Symphony. Had **Clemens Krauss's** superb 1930 Vienna Philharmonic HMV recording been available, WRA might have worried less. It is none the less remarkable how well this most elusive of great 19th-century symphonies was served in the early years of electronic recording.

The Third is the most personal of Brahms's four symphonies, and the shortest. It is a glorious work, yet a deeply troubled one. And there is the added peculiarity of its being, unusually for its genre and age, a symphony in which all four movements end quietly.

Brahms was 50 and at the zenith of his art when he completed it in 1883. He remained resolutely silent as to the work's inner content yet the music itself provides clues. The great summons at the opening rests on the notes F-A-F ('Frei aber froh', 'Free but happy'), a cipher Brahms had used in response to his friend Joseph Joachim's motto F-A-E ('Frei aber einsam', 'Free but lonely') in that halcyon age in Düsseldorf in the early 1850s when the young Brahms was taken under the wing of Robert and Clara Schumann. It can be no coincidence that there is a clear echo of Schumann's own Third Symphony,

the *Rhenish*, in the passionate down-sweep of the strings in bar three of the Brahms. Were Schumann and his troubled end a cue for this great outpouring?

Brahms's use of the F-A-F cipher is itself ambiguous. The 'A' in bar two is an A flat, tipping the work instantly towards the minor key, with a sinister tritone adding to the sense of angst. And what of the later transformation of the exposition's gracious dance into a nightmare waltz, or the crisis-laden mood of much of the work's finale? Time and again during this symphony, WB Yeats's words come to mind: 'For Nature's pulled her tragic buskin on/And all the rant's a mirror of my mood.'

Too multifaceted to be known from a single interpretation, the Third Symphony can be played classically or romantically, briskly or with great breadth. Brahms himself was not prescriptive when it came to such matters. Tempo modification fascinated him to the point of obsession, but he knew that speed itself is relative. Metronome marks were anathema to him ('I have never believed that my blood and a mechanical instrument go well together'), and he mistrusted musicians who put their faith in them.

### FIRST RECORDINGS

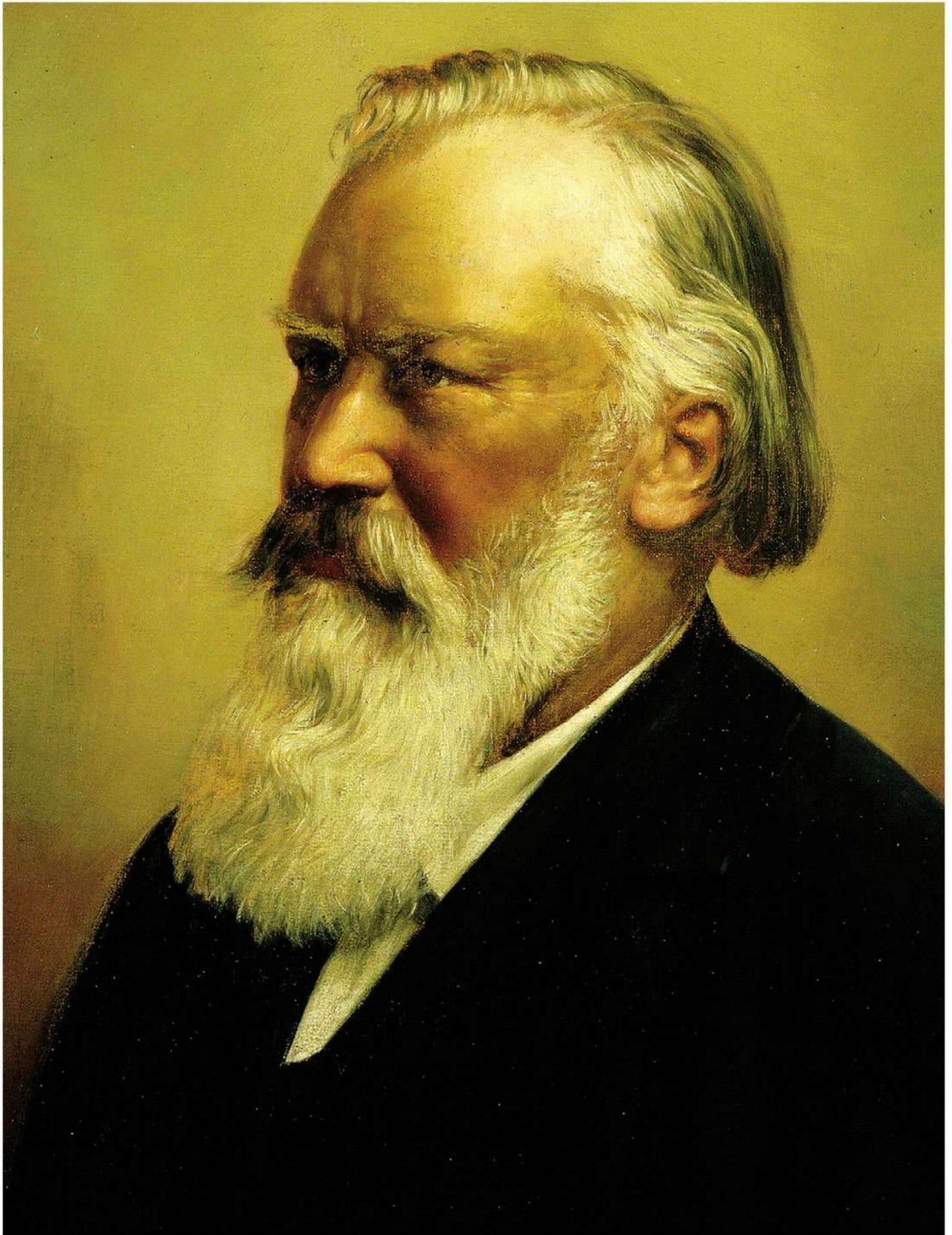
The earliest extant recording of the Third Symphony was made in 1928 by **Leopold Stokowski** and the Philadelphia Orchestra. It is finely played without undue resort to saturated string tone. The principal drawback is an over-inflated account of the

troubled pastorage which is the work's *Andante*. At a little over 10 minutes, Stokowski's performance of this movement is not quite as protracted as his 1959 Houston version, but it remains out of scale with the work as a whole. The 1932 **Willem Mengelberg** recording is a somewhat portentous affair.

The first movement, complete with its exposition repeat, is positively Gladstonian and the two inner movements are much pulled about. Neither of these versions compares well with the 37-year-old Clemens Krauss's 1930 recording with the Vienna Philharmonic, which remains one of the truest of all accounts of the symphony on record. It is a beautifully articulated performance, strongly drawn yet rhythmically crisp, with a slow movement that is every bit as expressive as Stokowski's but better paced. **Sergey Koussevitzky's** 1945 Boston recording (RCA, 7/74R) has similar qualities to Krauss's, though there is a fearful solecism in bar two where Koussevitzky allows the trumpets' high pedal F to overtop the orchestra, transforming Brahms's F-A-F into a blandly tautological F-F-F.

Starting the symphony is not easy, as one of its most sure-footed contemporary interpreters, Marin Alsop, told James Jolly in a Brahms symposium in *Gramophone* in March 2005: 'It's quite tricky to find the right tempo that propels it without pushing it too much. This is crucial to Brahms: giving it space without making it sound slow.' She added, 'I think great orchestras can really do that. They can fill in the time.'





PHOTOGRAPHY: THE ART ARCHIVE/ALAMY



One way of increasing the thrust of the opening is to make an unmarked *crescendo* in the already excoriating second bar.

**George Szell** does this to searing effect in a live Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra performance in 1952, though not in his more generously paced 1964 Cleveland studio recording. As Alsop suggests, it takes exceptional skill successfully to drive this first movement forward and yet retain a weight and presence. Szell, who, like Furtwängler, knew the work inside out and played it in different ways on different occasions, had that ability.

#### CLASSIC VERSUS ROMANTIC

Furtwängler believed that 'naturalness of utterance' is 'the difficult, the ultimate thing' in Brahms interpretation. ('Preternatural' would be the best word to describe his own Brahms.) If what we are looking for is directness and clarity of line, with the score's frequent technical difficulties unassumingly resolved at no cost to the music's power and presence, then **Felix Weingartner** with the LPO in 1938, **Otto Klemperer** with the Philharmonia Orchestra in 1957, **Sir Adrian Boult** with the LSO in 1970 or **James Loughran** with the Hallé in 1975 – all English orchestras – collectively emerge as well-nigh exemplary interpreters. A fifth such performance, by **Günter Wand** and the North German Radio SO (1983) based in Brahms's native Hamburg, also has that distinctive northern European pedigree.

None of these classicised readings would be of any account if they were not driven on by a powerful sustaining pulse. Dogged good sense (and the kind of short-windedness that can often accompany it) is a great subverter of this particular work, as we can hear in versions as far apart in time as Eduard van Beinum's in 1956 and David Zinman's in 2010. Nor is a tried-and-tested reading guaranteed to take flight on every occasion. Karl Böhm, Marek

Janowski and Wolfgang Sawallisch all impressed with first recordings of the Third, but failed to repeat the effect on later occasions.

**Wilhelm Furtwängler** created his own sense of occasion. For him the Third Symphony was a work of sudden surges, delayed charges and buried detonations. 'Subjective?' asked Michael Oliver in *Gramophone* of Furtwängler's Brahms. 'Certainly. If one of a conductor's functions is to realise the composer's intentions, another is to convince you that those intentions matter.' Furtwängler conducted the symphony many times, yet by a happy chance his two extant Berlin-made recordings are complementary. The 1954 performance is the more serene, the 1949 – an experience unique in the annals of the work on record – the more impassioned, an essay in what Furtwängler himself called 'the energy of becoming, inexorability and the force of onward motion'. So caught up is Furtwängler in Brahms's tragic mood, he even adds to the composer's own careful revisions of the orchestration by providing minatory timpani rolls either side of the arrival of the finale's second subject. Furtwängler's is a forward-moving performance built on an epic scale, a point underlined by his decision here (though not in 1954) to take the exposition repeat.

#### COURAGE AND CONVICTION

The structure of the symphony's opening movement tends to be weakened if the exposition repeat is ignored. This is particularly so in performances that further undermine the structure with the kind of unwanted accelerations and decelerations favoured by **Sergiu Celibidache** in his live 1976 Stuttgart performance. The fact that Celibidache's 1987 Munich recording is unstable in entirely different ways suggests that he never (as Felix Weingartner put it) fully 'assimilated' the work. Not that he

was alone in this. The 1952 RCA recording from **Arturo Toscanini** was a movement-by-movement identikit assemblage based on the old man's attempt to memorise the best features of four separate NBC radio performances. It was a curious procedure. Cloning performances, one's own or other people's, is doubly defeating in the context of a work that openly engages the question of the vulnerability of private sensibility and the value of individual vision. Yet, such was Toscanini's influence, even the self-evidently flawed 1952 RCA recording was slavishly copied, right down to the maestro's egregious *subito piano* in bar six. A recording by James Levine and the Chicago SO offers a particularly close paraphrase. Ironically, it was Toscanini's protégé **Guido Cantelli** who best grasped, or was best able to realise, what his mentor was attempting. Cantelli's 1955 Kingsway Hall recording was notable in its day. If there was more impulse to the first movement, and a clearer sifting of internal voicings, it would be a front-runner still.

A conductor who omits the exposition repeat but whose broad tempi and richly assimilated understanding of the symphony's argument convinces one of the rightness of his action is **Kurt Sanderling** in his 1972 recording with the Dresden Staatskapelle. This is an epic traversal of the symphony whose 72-bar exposition needs no repetition, so completely does Sanderling set out the symphony's terrain to our gaze. You might think that such an effect could be achieved only by a conductor in the full maturity of his art. This is true, though in 1970 **Bernard Haitink**, the then-41-year-old principal conductor of the Concertgebouw Orchestra, offered a similarly broadly based reading. It is a version that continues to impress with the certainty of its aim and the clarity and purity of its sound – a collaborative act between conductor, orchestra and the



#### THE UNMISSABLE

BPO / **Furtwängler**

EMI Ⓜ ③ 565513-2

The sound here is fragile and the audience intrusive, but this is a performance like no other. You may not sleep for nights after hearing it, but you'll be richer and wiser for the experience.



#### THE CLASSICIST'S VIEW

Philharmonia / **Klemperer**

EMI Ⓜ ③ 562742-2

Born and brought up to Brahms, Klemperer is the most dauntless of the symphony's classicising interpreters. What on LP was a rather acerbic-sounding recording emerges on CD with greater body and warmth.



#### BUDGET RICHES

LPO / **Alsop**

Naxos Ⓢ 8.557430

Discussing Brahms's Third Symphony is one thing, conducting it is something else. Marin Alsop does both shrewdly, sensitively, perceptively. This is the latest in a distinguished line of LPO Thirds stretching back to Weingartner in 1938.



record's producer Jaap van Ginneken, the unaffected truthfulness of whose recordings remain a lesson to us all. Haitink's approach to the symphony has not greatly changed down the years but ways of preserving it have become a good deal more slipshod. His 2004 LSO Live account is not only less well played, it is much more crudely recorded.

The principal danger of such slow-drawn readings is the loss of concentration in lyric subjects and at critical points of transition. This is one of the reasons why Leonard Bernstein's interminable 1981 Vienna Philharmonic recording should be avoided at all costs.

**Mariss Jansons** is far less self-indulgent in his broadly argued live 2010 Bavarian Radio performance, but there are pitfalls here which even he doesn't entirely avoid. On paper **Carlo Maria Giulini's** 1990 Vienna recording should also come into this category, but Giulini's speeds are deceptive. As Edward Seckerson has noted, 'His innate sense of architectural coherence and the sheer will of his commitment keep heart and mind engaged.' Exquisitely painted by the orchestra, this is a reading that can be set beside Sanderling's in terms of its power and long-term vision.

Fifty-minute traversals of the symphony, such as we have from Haitink, Sanderling and Giulini, occupy a very different world to the kind of 30-minute lick-and-a-promise performances served up by **Bruno Walter** in Vienna in 1936 and New York in 1953. How different these are from the 83-year-old Walter's broader, more rhythmically stable but not less vivid 1960 California-made recording with the hand-picked Columbia Symphony Orchestra. This is one of the great Brahms Thirds – what one imagined Walter's Brahms always was but which the early recordings gainsay. Comparison can be made here with **Eugen Jochum**: his 1938 Hamburg performance barely holds together; his 1956 Berlin version is much improved; his 1976 LPO recording (EMI, 10/77) is best of all.

### QUESTIONS OF COLOUR

One aspect of the Third Symphony, which Walter and an almost excessively analytical CBS recording bring into focus, is the particular quality of Brahms's orchestration. This is something you will also find in **Fritz Reiner's** exquisitely played 1957 Chicago performance and **Herbert von Karajan's** 1961 account with the Vienna Philharmonic, a performance that suggests a more than passing debt by Brahms to Schumann and to the tone-painting of Wagner. Karajan's three Berlin versions are a good deal less interesting, compromised as they are by the conductor's almost studied disregard for the symphony's troubled psychopathology.

A conductor without a dispassionate bone in his body was **Sir John Barbirolli**.



Left: Brahms, seated, with his friend Joachim; below: Barbirolli was 'memorable' in Brahms Three



## SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

DATE / ARTISTS	RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)
1928 Philadelphia Orch / <b>Stokowski</b>	Biddulph (M) ② WHL017/18 (8/94*)
1930 VPO / <b>Krauss</b>	Biddulph (M) WHL052 (6/99)
1932 Concertgebouw Orch / <b>Mengelberg</b>	Andante (M) ④ AN1973-9 (4/33*)
1938 LPO / <b>Weingartner</b>	EMI (M) ② 764256-2 (9/39*)
1949 BPO / <b>Furtwängler</b>	EMI (M) ③ 565513-2 (2/96*)
1952 Hallé Orch / <b>Barbirolli</b>	Barbirolli Society (B) ② SJB1020 (5/53*)
1952 Concertgebouw Orch / <b>Szell</b>	Audiophile (B) APL101 561
1952 Philh Orch / <b>Toscanini</b>	Testament (M) ③ SBT3167 (3/00)
1954 BPO / <b>Furtwängler</b>	DG (M) 423 572-2GDO (5/76*)
1955 Philh Orch / <b>Cantelli</b>	Testament (M) SBT1173 (9/56*, 12/99)
1957 Philh Orch / <b>Klemperer</b>	EMI (M) ③ 562742-2 (6/58*)
1957 Chicago SO / <b>Reiner</b>	RCA (M) 09026 61793-2 (12/58*)
1960 Columbia SO / <b>Walter</b>	Sony (M) SMK64471 (2/61*)
1961 VPO / <b>Karajan</b>	Decca (B) 478 2661DOR (9/62*)
1964 Cleveland Orch / <b>Szell</b>	Sony (B) SBK47652 (8/65*, 6/96)
1967 VPO / <b>Barbirolli</b>	Royal (B) ② ROY6434 (2/69)
1970 LSO / <b>Boult</b>	EMI (M) 769203-2 (2/71*)
1970 Concertgebouw Orch / <b>Haitink</b>	Philips (M) ④ 442 068-2PB4 (3/71*, 9/94)
1972 Dresden Staatskapelle / <b>Sanderling</b>	RCA (B) ③ 74321 30367-2 (10/73*, 1/97)
1975 Hallé / <b>Loughran</b>	EMI (F) 75753-2 (7/76*)
1976 LPO / <b>Jochum</b>	EMI (F) SLS5093 (10/77)
1983 NDR SO / <b>Wand</b>	RCA (S) 88697 71136-2 (2/87*)
1987 Munich PO / <b>Celibidache</b>	EMI (F) ② 556846-2
1989 BPO / <b>Abbado</b>	DG (F) 429 765-2GH (1/91); (F) ④ 435 683-2GH4
1990 VPO / <b>Giulini</b>	Newton (M) ② 8802063 (8/91*)
1990 London Classical Plyrs / <b>Norrington</b>	EMI (F) 556118-2 (8/96)
1997 BPO / <b>Harnoncourt</b>	Teldec (F) ③ 0630 13136-2 (11/97); Warner (S) ⑤ 2564 69004-9
2005 LPO / <b>Alsop</b>	Naxos (S) 8 557430 (3/07)
2008 Orch Révolutionnaire et Romantique / <b>Gardiner</b>	SDG (F) SDG704 (11/09)
2008 BPO / <b>Rattle</b>	EMI (B) ③ 267254-2 (A/09)
2010 Bavarian Rad SO / <b>Jansons</b>	BR-Klassik (F) ② 900111 (6/11)

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# Disc of the month

Bach	Cantatas	Taylor, Tafelmusik	£12.75
Fauré	Cello Sonatas	Gerhardt	£10.25
Franck	+ Debussy, Poulenc Cello Sonatas	Gastinel	£12.25
Gubaidulina	Seven Words, Kadenza	Encinar	£12.75
Joplin	Treemonisha (2CD)	Johnson, Benjamin	£26.00
Liszt	Dance of the Dead etc. (SACD)	Tiempo	£13.00
Lutoslawski	Symphonic Variations etc. (SACD)	Gardner	£12.50
Rautavaara	#Incantations etc.	Storgårds	£10.50
Ruders	Symphony No. 4 etc.	Minczuk	£12.25
Tchaikovsky	Symphony No. 5 + Shostakovich	Sokhiev	£11.95
Van der Aa	Up-Close (DVD)	Sol Gabetta	£12.50
	Complete Solo Recordings (5CD)	Rosenthal	£26.00

## Recent Recommended Releases

Brahms	Ein Deutsches Requiem + Schütz	Gardiner	£10.50
Chopin	Piano Works Vol. 2	Louis Lortie	£11.00
Kalkbrenner	Piano Concertos 2 & 3 - Romantic Piano 56	Shelley	£10.25
Massenet	Werther (2CD)	Villazón, Pappano	£15.50
Saariaho	Works for Orchestra (4CD)	Saraste, Eschenbach	£22.00
Spohr	Symphonies Nos. 7 & 9 etc.	Shelley	£10.25
Stravinsky	Rite of Spring, Firebird etc. (SACD)	Fischer	£10.50
Wagner	2 Symphonies, Rienzi etc. (SACD)	Järvi	£11.50
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Clemens Krauss with the Vienna Philharmonic in 1934, just a few years after their recording of Brahms's Third



## THE OVERALL CHOICE

BPO / **Abbado**

DG © 429 765-2GH

This is the finest of the modern versions, a performance that sits well beside classic recordings such as those by Krauss in the 1930s, Walter and Barbirolli in the 60s, and Sanderling in the 70s.



Visit the Gramophone Player at [gramophone.co.uk](http://gramophone.co.uk) to hear excerpts from this month's featured recordings

He made two recordings of the Third Symphony, the first in Manchester in 1952, the second in Vienna in 1967; both are memorable, both too little known. The absence of an exposition repeat is more of a problem with the swifter and lighter-toned Hallé performance (which gets off to a rocky start with over-prominent trumpets in bar two). Yet this is wonderful Brahms: trenchant, vital, from the heart. A slowish finale notwithstanding, the later Vienna Philharmonic recording is finer still. Trevor Harvey praised it to the skies in these columns in February 1969. Yet, like the distinguished Boult recording made in 1970, it is a version that has been more honoured in its absence than in its availability.

Barbirolli's reading was unusual for its swift yet at the same time affecting and finely pointed way with the symphony's two inner movements (a quality shared with an offering from Sir Thomas Beecham, an infrequent visitor to this particular musical shore, whose otherwise overly fierce 1957 Symphony of the Air performance can be found on YouTube). One episode is of particular importance: the sombre triplet-dominated six-note phrase on clarinet and bassoon which casts its shadow not only over the slow movement but over the finale too. Elgar described the motif's later appearance as 'the tragic outcome of a wistful theme'. Is it their exposure to Elgar's own music that makes British conductors such effective purveyors of the episode's melancholy, far-off feel?

## A DECLINING MARKET

Memorable recordings of the Third Symphony became increasingly scarce in the

later years of the 20th century as the old ways of conducting the music were either forgotten or proscribed. Sadly, the fresh interest period practice brought to the symphonies of Beethoven worked less well for those of Brahms. Performance historian Robert Philip wondered whether **Roger Norrington** knew how the Third generally went. Norrington's was, he said on Radio 3's *Record Review*, 'an unusually straight performance compared with the disciplined yet highly nuanced performances of Szell or Bruno Walter'. Jonathan Swain, writing in *Gramophone*, thought it more 'a trail-blazing performance' than 'an interpretation that had had time to mature'. Much was made of the lighter string sound and the more forward winds. But this was nothing new. Such balances are writ large in Klemperer's stoically splendid 1957 EMI recording.

Mention was also made of the reduced size of the orchestra. In the 1880s, the Vienna Philharmonic, which gave the work its premiere under Hans Richter, was heard alongside Hans von Bülow's Meiningen Orchestra. Brahms's friend the critic Eduard Hanslick thought the 45-strong Meiningen Orchestra 'comparatively weak', lacking the 'brilliance and fullness of tone' of the 90-man Philharmonic. There is evidence that Brahms, too, could be irked by Bülow's small-scale, over-literal readings, and by the mannerisms he occasionally found it necessary to introduce. How satisfied would Brahms have been, one wonders, with **Nikolaus Harnoncourt's** closely managed but oddly tired-sounding 1997 Berlin recording? In 2008, a further period-instrument performance appeared, directed by **Sir John Eliot Gardiner**. It boasted

tinder-dry sonorities and set a new land-speed record for the finale.

The most accomplished Brahms Third of the new century came from **Marin Alsop** and the LPO in 2005, a long-drawn, dark-hued reading blessed with exquisite phrasing, keen articulation and good rhythm. **Sir Simon Rattle's** 2008 recording revived the old Berlin Philharmonic Brahms sound in a performance that went deeper than Karajan's but which suffered from moments of unwanted calculation. There is nothing of this in **Claudio Abbado's** 1989 Berlin recording. This was made in September of that year, barely two months after Karajan's death and shortly before the players elected Abbado as their chief conductor. It was clearly a meeting of some moment. The Berliners are on peerless form, an asset which Abbado, ever the thoroughbred musician, exploits to remarkable effect in a reading that marries impetus and eloquence in special measure.

Brahms's Third Symphony is difficult to capture in a single snapshot. The one performance that comes close to being all-encompassing is Furtwängler's in Berlin in 1949, though the sound is indifferent, the audience occasionally intrusive. Among currently available, single-disc versions, Claudio Abbado's is a clear first choice. This reading ranks with the best of any era, and there is a visceral quality to the playing which is de rigueur in this symphony. More classically minded Brahmsians should consider Klemperer or, if a single CD is sought, Günter Wand. The best of the rest can generally be found with a little looking. This is a symphony, highly strung and elusive to the touch, which it pays to collect. **G**



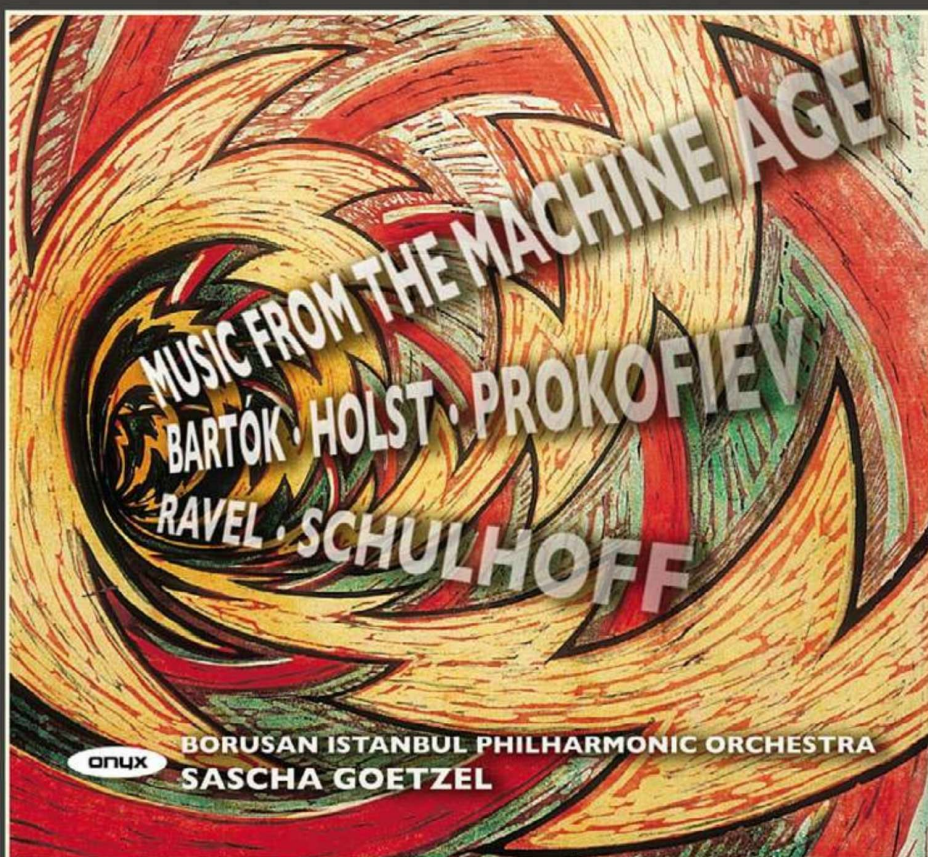
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# MUSICAL JOURNEYS

Gramophone's monthly search for the best classical music experiences around the world

## *Sailing the Calgary seas*

Canadian Heldentenor Ben Heppner sings Ahab in Jake Heggie's *Moby-Dick*, writes **Bill Rankin**



Tenor Ben Heppner stars as Ahab – complete with prosthetic peg leg

In Dallas in late April 2010, Ben Heppner donned a peg leg and began a halting international journey aboard the whaling ship *Pequod* in American composer Jake Heggie's *Moby-Dick*, an opera based on the sprawlingly encyclopedic novel by the 19th-century author Herman Melville.

Heppner turned 57 in January, about the same age as *Moby-Dick*'s megalomaniacal Captain Ahab, the driving force behind the tragic seafaring yarn that librettist Gene Scheer has brilliantly distilled into a tightly focused tale of obsession and disaster on the high seas. Last January Heppner withdrew from his commitment to sing the role of Siegfried at the Met – he decided he was getting too old to take up the vocally onerous Wagner role – opening his schedule to return to his homeland to reprise the part of Ahab. It would be his first engagement in Canada in 17 years.

With the help of a cane and, in one scene, a harpoon, Heppner hobbles about the stage, ranting and raving in mostly pristine tenor tones at his hapless crew, who have signed on to kill whales but become fodder in Ahab's relentless mission to destroy the white whale that made him a cripple.

'It's a big role,' Heppner tells me at the end of a day of rehearsal in Calgary, where the third of five productions occurred in late January and early February. (*Moby-Dick* is co-produced by companies in Dallas, Adelaide, Calgary, San Diego and San Francisco.) 'There's not a lot of softness to the character of Ahab. He's always sort of barking orders or challenging slight challenges to his authority, so it's a fairly intense sing,' he says.

It's a peculiarly physical role as well. Asked after the Canadian premiere on January 28 whether he'd found a way to wear the prosthesis so it didn't hamper his operatic duties, Heppner said that singing on one leg had got no easier since the Dallas premiere.

'I think I've aged,' he said as autograph-seekers pressed him for some post-performance attention. 'I think it's harder. The last week of rehearsals was really, really intense, so I found it hard to find the balance between the vocal demands and the physical demands.'

Whatever constraints the peg leg may have put on his singing, it didn't show in his performance. He is an immense presence to begin with, at well over six feet, and physically hefty, and Heggie has given him a large vocal chore. Heppner has had throat problems over the past few years but his production was secure and dramatic.

The all-Canadian cast had several other standout performances: from baritone Brett Polegato as Ahab's first mate, who offers stalwart resistance to the madman's doomed plot, and from tenor Colin Ainsworth, who sings the role of callow Ishmael of Melville's novel, renamed Greenhorn in Scheer's libretto.

The production itself is cutting-edge theatre, featuring astounding digital effects conjured by projection designer Elaine McCarthy for

*'There's not a lot of softness to Ahab. He's often barking orders so it's intense to sing'*

the Dallas opening and all subsequent incarnations. She has created computer-generated images of three whaling boats that rock and roll upon the roiling sea as the whalers pursue their prey. Ahab's ship, the *Pequod*, periodically emerges upon a black scrim as a collection of lines and points of light that slowly form the outline of the whaling vessel like some bulky constellation coming into focus before our eyes.

On the stage of Calgary's Jubilee Auditorium, set designer Robert Brill gives the Calgary Opera men's chorus and a handful of supernumeraries recruited from a nearby Rocky Mountain community for their mountaineering expertise an intricate latticework of ropes and ladders to clamber about on. Yannick Portauw, a Belgian living in Canmore, 70 miles west of Calgary, answered the call for experienced climbers. He said he likes opera but he wasn't asked to help with the chorus work. His job was to help the singers navigate the rigging and believably portray the sailors under Ahab's spell. 'There was a lot of climbing stuff and fights, so there was a lot of training so we didn't hurt ourselves,' Portauw says during the Canadian premiere's after-party. 'We had to train people who had never been in a harness or used connectors before.'

## *Spinal Chords*

Hannah Nepil attends the London premiere of a heartfelt work for the Cultural Olympiad by Sally Beamish

It was a natural alliance. Yet when the composer Sally Beamish called her friend and neighbour Melanie Reid to ask if she would write the text for her new piece, the initial reaction was tentative. 'I thought, if Sally wants it by this Friday, then I can't do it,' says Reid, 'so I asked her, "When's the deadline?" and she said, "Next May". To a journalist, that's like saying "Never".' That conversation





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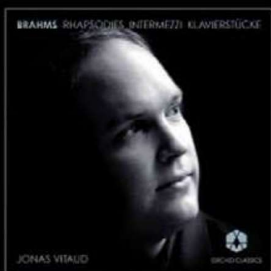


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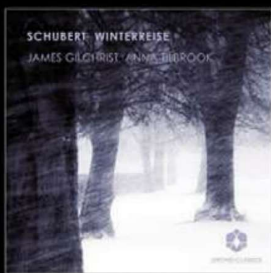


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took place in autumn 2010, a few months after Reid broke her neck and back in a horse-riding accident. Like many others, Beamish had been following Reid's weekly column in *The Times*, in which the journalist describes her struggle to cope with spinal injury. When Beamish was asked to compose a 12-minute piece of music as part of the PRS for Music Foundation's New Music 20x12 for the Cultural Olympiad, she wondered whether Reid would write a text based on her experience.

'I was slightly worried that Sally wanted me to be poetic,' says Reid. 'I'm a writer, not a poet. But she reassured me that she wanted me to use my own voice.' Reid wrote a dramatic summary of her accident and its aftermath. Beamish set to work and, a few months later, she played Reid her first draft. 'We sat at my kitchen table and

*I was slightly worried Sally wanted me to be poetic. I'm a writer – not a poet'*

Sally read my words in time to the music, which she had recorded electronically,' recalls Reid. 'I sat and wept: the two things together were bigger than the sum of their parts.'

Listening to the London premiere of *Spinal Chords* at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, I understood what she meant. To preserve the directness of the text, Beamish chose to have it not sung but spoken by an actor. Juliet Stevenson brought out every nuance in the words, drawing strength from their wide emotional palette and eking out moments of wry humour. Meanwhile, Beamish's piece – performed by players from the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment – provided inflection and atmosphere, not unlike a film score.

The strings-only work is based on a series of 12 chords, which are played by progressively larger groups of instrumentalists

## The insider's guide

Gramophone selects April's unmissable musical events

### 1 Birmingham, Symphony Hall

The Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse under Tugan Sokhiev conclude their debut tour of the UK with Rachmaninov's *Symphonic Dances*, and Saint-Saëns's *Organ Symphony* with soloist Thomas Trotter. [thsh.co.uk](http://thsh.co.uk)

### 2 Abu Dhabi, Emirates Palace

Sir Ronald Harwood's *Beloved Friend*, featuring actor Simon Russell Beale, receives its Arab premiere as part of the Abu Dhabi Festival, which runs from March 19 to April 15. [abudhabifestival.ae](http://abudhabifestival.ae)

### 3 Edinburgh, Merchiston Castle School

Catriona McKay, Chris Stout and the Scottish Ensemble perform Sally Beamish's new *Seavengers*, a concerto for Scottish harp, fiddle and string orchestra, as part of the International Harp Festival. [harpfestival.co.uk](http://harpfestival.co.uk)

### 5 Los Angeles, Walt Disney Concert Hall

John Adams conducts the Los Angeles Philharmonic in Philip Glass's *Symphony No 9*, and his

own Violin Concerto with soloist Leila Josefowicz, on April 5, 6 and 7. [laphil.com](http://laphil.com)

### 11 Melbourne, Plenary Hall

Video games take centre stage in a concert devoted to music from *Final Fantasy* and *Secret of Mana* performed by the Melbourne Symphony conducted by Philip Chu on April 11 and 12. [mso.com.au](http://mso.com.au)

### 13 London, St George's, Hanover Square

La Nuova Musica directed by David Bates perform Handel's *Il pastor fido*, featuring Lucy Crowe, as part of the London Handel Festival, which runs from March 15 to April 24. [london-handel-festival.com](http://london-handel-festival.com)

### 18 Brno, Besední dům

The Graffe Quartet and pianist Michiko Otaki give the world premiere of Martinů's Piano Quintet No 0, H35. [filharmonie-brno.cz](http://filharmonie-brno.cz)

### 18 London, Royal Festival Hall

Colin Currie and the London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Osmo Vänskä give the world premiere of Kalevi Aho's Percussion





Actress Juliet Stevenson narrates Reid's text against Beamish's music

until the conclusion, when the entire orchestra states them together. The symbolism of reconnection and healing is clear, and the music is uplifting – 'but of course,' says Beamish, 'Melanie doesn't know where her journey is going to finish, so the ending is left suspended'. As a whole, the work is so delicate that one feels as if it might suddenly disappear. Beamish draws on Baroque practice as well as that of Scottish traditional music, and occasionally snippets of folk-like ornamentation make brief appearances before fading away. The overall impression is of translucence, transience, deceptive simplicity. But, above all, it is deeply, deeply moving. **G**

Hear excerpts from *New Music 20x12 commissions* at [gramophone.co.uk](http://gramophone.co.uk)

Concerto alongside Brahms's First Symphony. [southbankcentre.co.uk](http://southbankcentre.co.uk)

**20** **Cardiff, St David's Hall**  
The BBC National Orchestra of Wales and soprano Lisa Milne premiere Simon Holt's *The Yellow Wallpaper* alongside Mahler's Symphony No 4, conducted by Thierry Fischer. [bbc.co.uk/orchestras](http://bbc.co.uk/orchestras)

**25** **Poole, Lighthouse**  
Cellist Truls Mørk joins the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra under Kirill Karabits to perform Prokofiev's *Sinfonia concertante* as part of the orchestra's 'Russian Masters' series in Poole, Exeter and Portsmouth. [bsolive.com](http://bsolive.com)

**26** **London, Kings Place**  
The Brodsky Quartet present 'The Musical Diaries of Shostakovich', performing the complete string quartets, plus the Piano Quintet with pianist Jenny Lin, April 26-29. [kingsplace.co.uk](http://kingsplace.co.uk)

**27** **New York, Metropolitan Opera House**  
New York's Metropolitan Opera presents Janáček's *The Makropulos Case* in April and May, starring Karita Mattila as Emilia Marty and conducted by Jiří Bělohlávek. [metoperafamily.org](http://metoperafamily.org)

## EVENT OF THE MONTH

### 21 *Berlin, Philharmonie*

Sir Simon Rattle conducts the Berlin Philharmonic and the Chorus of Berlin State Opera in a concert version of Bizet's *Carmen* featuring Magdalena Kožená in the title-role and Jonas Kaufmann as Don José. Earlier in the month, Rattle conducts the orchestra and soloists in the same work in Salzburg with the Vienna State Opera Chorus. [berliner-philharmoniker.de](http://berliner-philharmoniker.de)



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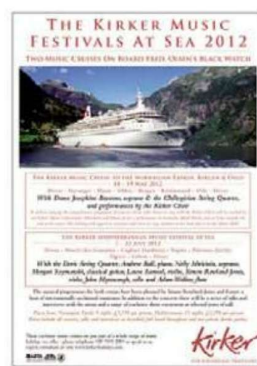
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## The month's latest audio arrivals, from simpler CD ripping to Meridian's bullet-shaped speakers

With so much focus on multichannel and mobile audio, it's good to see hi-fi is still taking centre stage

My Audio Essay this month looks at the parlous state of the TV business on which so many consumer electronics companies have depended for many years for their profits, and spots some green shoots of audio interest forcing their way through the cracks in streets no longer paved with gold.

Meanwhile companies with a long-term interest in all things hi-fi are adapting to the new ways that we listen to music, and also making audio more flexible and easier to use.

Meridian, one of the pioneers of digital audio, is now making its digital systems even more room friendly with the arrival of the sleek, compact m6 speakers, which will sell for £4500 a pair. Requiring just a single cable to connect them (all the amplification and digital signal processing is built-in), they can

be run with the company's Audio Core 200 control centre to make a simple, easy-to-use system. There's something almost Bang & Olufsen about the idea...

On which subject, the Danish company is reinventing itself with the arrival of B&O Play, a sub-brand 'geared towards a more playful and portable product portfolio'. With design by Danish designer Cecilie Manz, the new Beolit 12 (€699), the first 'Play' product, combines the look of the company's 1960s transistor radios with modern features such as Apple AirPlay, and docking and charging for a range of iOS devices.

For all that, it's a serious audio product, with a 120W Class D amp package driving two 5cm units and a 10cm woofer, and audio design and tuning by B&O's speaker team.

Arcam has made digital-to-analogue converters for longer than most – right back to its Black Box models from the end of the 1980s – and now it has a new high-end converter for the computer age, the £2000 FMJ D33 'SuperDAC'. It has a 24-bit/192kHz Burr Brown PCM1792 converter for each channel plus user-selectable filters, and claims ultra-low jitter on all inputs.

In addition to the asynchronous USB input, usable with both PCs and Macs, the D33 has two optical digital inputs, two S/PDIF electrical inputs and an AES/EBU professional grade digital input.

Also doing a spot of reinvention is Focal, whose XS Book desktop speakers are on test this month: it's made its first pair of headphones, the Spirit One. Selling for £200, and with a construction making use of aircraft-grade aluminium, self-damping ABS for the earpieces and mylar/titanium drive units, it's a closed-back model designed to keep noise out and your music in, and the company says comfort was a priority. After all, these are the first Focals you could listen to throughout a long-haul flight! **G**



- 1** Distinctly bullet-shaped, Meridian's m6 speakers sell for £4500 – just add controller
- 2** Arcam's FMJ D33 'SuperDAC' is the latest in a long line of digital products from the British firm
- 3** The Focal Spirit One is the first headphone model from the French loudspeaker specialist
- 4** It's playtime: Bang & Olufsen's new B&O Play line kicks off with the Beolit 12 iPod speaker system



# Are You Buying Pre-Ruined

## The Music Chain

Much is written about music and the musicians who entertain us, and we rightly exalt great musicians. But there is an interlinked chain of participants, two of which are I believe are crucial to our music scene in today's world. For centuries the music chain was a very short one – composers or songwriters, musicians and listeners, and the judgement on quality was immediate. Recording technologies have changed all this exponentially.

Today, we listen to most of our music from a recording and this gives recording engineers the opportunity to avoid poor acoustics, duff notes and off days. This, of course, means the chain has grown to include the recording engineers, the music distribution system (retailers or downloads), hi-fi manufacturers, hi-fi sellers and the hi-fi purchasers, the latter being the listeners. I should start by saying that hi-fi has become an adulterated term that no longer has its original meaning because it's applied to much equipment that certainly should not be termed high-fidelity.

It's said that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. However, I believe there are two particularly strong links that, if removed from the chain, would seriously damage the quality of recorded music. These are the audiophile, or hi-fi connoisseur, and the specialist hi-fi retailer, the latter in nearly all cases also being the former because it's their interest that has driven them into their particular business. These are the people who most appreciate how exciting and involving music can be and how it can deliver an emotional experience.

## Hi-Fi Connoisseurs

So why is the hi-fi connoisseur so important to the music industry? By their nature, audiophiles are generally avid music lovers who enhance their enjoyment through listening to music at its very best quality level, which means playing great recordings

through hi-end hi-fi to achieve the most outstanding results. Without the audiophile, the main driver for quality would probably be removed from the chain. Let's be honest, over recent years the majority of music listeners now settle for MP3 convenience and, therefore, mediocre sound quality, that is 'pre-ruined' music. If the pendulum ever swings so far that all but a few listen to highly compressed formats such as MP3, music producers will not waste their resources on producing high quality recordings because it would be commercially unnecessary, even if their recording engineers wanted to achieve the best they could. After all, an MP3 or AAC file, the iTunes default format, downloaded at 128 kbps (the most popular download speed), is about one-eleventh the size of a full resolution CD track, 1411 kbps, so the quality is inevitably far inferior. Information is irretrievably lost and the full dynamic range is lacking. Using an iPod while jogging does not really raise a quality issue but playing low-resolution tracks through an iPod docking station that feeds into a decent hi-fi system, is a disaster area. It's rubbish quality made louder. Fortunately, there is still significant demand from audiophiles committed to sound quality to sustain the production of high quality recordings, but it would be a tragedy if there weren't. For example, most classical recordings downloaded as an MP3 or AAC file are a complete waste of time because there is so much information missing that they are reduced to just the essence of a tune.

## Specialist Hi-Fi Retailers

Just as essential a link in the chain as the hi-fi connoisseur is the specialist hi-fi retailer and the two are rightly dependent on each other. Without the specialist retailer the hi-end hi-fi manufacturer would have to rely on the internet and hi-fi magazine reviewers to try and assess the relative merits and

performance of their products against that of their competitors – a notoriously unreliable decision making process. Specialist hi-fi retailers are constantly being offered new products for assessment and potential stocking and, as it is also their hobby as well as their livelihood, they are greatly interested in achieving the best performance and seeking out the most outstanding products and combinations. More than that though is their relationship with audiophiles for, if they are to stay in business, they must satisfy the most discerning customers in the industry. The reality is that audiophiles and specialist hi-fi retailers are essential to each other.

## Future of Recorded Music

What are the future prospects of maintaining high quality music recordings? We must hope that audiophiles, or hi-fi connoisseurs, or perhaps most accurately described, music lovers, will continue to drive the demand for quality. But another important reason for hope within the mass-market is that there is no longer any over-riding reason for MP3 and AAC to have such a following. These formats were designed to overcome very slow download speeds and expensive memory capacity. These are not significant factors for most people now. Full resolution, CD quality, downloads are already available and should become the norm as long as the general public can be made aware of the tremendous quality benefit. This has happened with HD TV so we know this awareness can grow rapidly. In the meantime, we must highly value hi-fi connoisseurs and specialist hi-fi retailers, of which the ones listed on this page represent the UK's finest. Specialist dealers know how to choose the products that combine as a superb system and how to get the best out of it by expert installation in the home. If there's a price premium over an internet purchase, it's probably a small one, but it's unquestionably worth the difference.



# Music?



The specialist dealers below have been selected because they are known to do an excellent job in guiding customers towards hi-fi that will give years of musical enjoyment and total satisfaction.

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VERDICT ..... ★ ★ ★ ★ ★





## ● REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

# NAIM ND5 XS

Naim's more affordable streaming player could just be a giant killer, says Andrew Everard

Since the Naim ND5 XS arrived in my system, I seem to have been asked by someone just about every day how it compares with the NDX, to which it plays the role of junior sibling. After all, the NDX, at a fiver short of £3000, was on the receiving end of a very enthusiastic review in these pages, and the £1950 ND5 XS represents a very worthwhile saving – enough to fund an amplifier good enough to show what it can do, and leave change toward a pair of speakers.

So what exactly is the ND5 XS? Well, it's a network music player, designed to stream music from a computer or dedicated network attached storage device over a home network, and can also stream internet radio. As the model designation suggests, it's basically an NDX written slightly smaller scale, and designed to sit alongside the company's XS series components, which are a step up from the entry-level 5i products.

The ND5 XS comes in the same slimline casework as the rest of the XS series, making it the better part of 2cm shorter in stature than the NDX – 7cm plays 8.7cm. But that obvious difference aside, there's little to distinguish the two outwardly, beyond a slightly different rear-panel layout and the replacement of the RS232 connector on the NDX, used for upgrades, with a mini-USB socket for the same function on the newer ND5 XS.

A DAB/FM radio module, factory-fitted, is an option, and like the NDX the ND5 XS can be upgraded with the addition of one of Naim's external power supplies. The 555 PS or more recent XPS units are options, but just released is a new slimline supply, the £1595 XP5 XS.

The ND5 XS can also be connected to Naim's offboard digital to analogue converter, simply called the DAC, or directly to the



### NAIM ND5 XS NETWORK MUSIC PLAYER

**Price** £1950

**Networking** Wired/wireless Ethernet

**Inputs** Three digital – two electrical, one optical

**Outputs** Electrical digital, analogue audio on RCA phono and DIN

**Other connectivity** USB, mini-USB for software/firmware updates, system automation connections

**File formats played** WAV, FLAC, Apple Lossless

(ALAC), AIFF, AAC, WMA, Ogg Vorbis, Internet radio vTuner

**Options/upgrades** DAB/FM radio module, XP5 XS/XPS/555PS power supplies, Naim DAC

**Accessories supplied** Remote handset, Wi-Fi antenna

**Dimensions** (WxHxD) 43.2x7x30.1cm  
[naimaudio.com](http://naimaudio.com)

digital inputs of the Supernait, and also has conventional analogue outputs – on both RCA phono and Naim's preferred locking DIN socket – and a choice of optical and electrical digital inputs, so external sources can be run through its onboard conversion.

In addition there's a system automation connection, allowing automatic source selection and volume control with suitable Naim amplifiers and preamplifiers, as well as control of other components. This is driven by the company's n-Stream remote app, running on an iPad, iPhone or iPod Touch. The

ND5 XS will play uncompressed WAV and AIFF (and lossless FLAC) at resolutions up to 192kHz/24-bit, Apple Lossless (ALAC) at up to 96kHz/24-bit, and MP3, Windows Media Audio and Ogg Vorbis compressed files at up to 320kbps. Via its vTuner implementation it can access a huge range of internet-streamed radio stations, and Apple AirPlay capability is expected very soon (and may be in place by the time you read this).

Within, there's digital technology derived from the Naim DAC, with upsampling, in-house digital filtering and Burr-Brown



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## SUGGESTED PARTNERS

The Naim will thrive with high-quality amplification and loudspeakers



### NAIM SUPERNAIT

The ND5 XS is styled to match the Nait 5 XS amp, but it sounds even better with the Supernait's additional power, drive and grip



### MONITOR AUDIO GOLD GX100

A big sound from fairly compact speakers? The superb Monitor Audios will do just the job

conversion, and Naim's own DSP-based signal buffering and reclocking, under the control of a SHARC 40-bit processor. The sections of the player are galvanically isolated from each other to reduce the possibility of interference.

## PERFORMANCE

As is usual I found wired connection – from my NAS device to the ND5 XS via a Netgear

ability of the ND5 XS, which is a remarkably accomplished player of content from low-bitrate rips of historical recordings.

Listened to in isolation, it's often amazing just how much detail the ND5 XS trawls from familiar recordings, and with good rips of CDs it's a match for some very upmarket CD players, making it a viable replacement for 'physical media' in a top notch audio system.

## DESIGN NOTES

### Phil Harris

Naim Technical Support

### On high-resolution music, harmonics and dynamics

As computer stored music moves out of the shadow of CD, Naim's Phil Harris explains what this 'hi-res' content is all about.

Asked about the advantages of higher-resolution files, he says, 'As the sample rate increases then so does the maximum frequency that can be reproduced. The notes may not extend to the (theoretical) 22kHz maximum of CD reproduction, but the harmonics of notes that give music its "feel" do – and well beyond too!

'As the bit-depth increases (from 16-bit to 24-bit), then the potential dynamic range of the recorded signal increases. With 16-bit the theoretical dynamic range is 96dB; with 24-bit that increases to 144dB.'

But not all 'hi-res' recordings are quite what they seem. 'The production and mixing can involve a pass through a compressor to increase the level of quiet portions of the music and reduce the loud bits.

**'Be aware that not all high-resolution recordings are quite what they seem'**

'Also be aware that just because an audio file might be 24-bit/192kHz, it doesn't mean that the source data or the source recording that was used to generate it was capable of that bandwidth or that dynamic range.

'It's perfectly possible to create a 24-bit/192kHz file from a 16-bit/44.1kHz "CD" source, and the high-resolution file can actually sound worse than the 16-bit/44.1kHz original. So don't get tied up in just a "bigger numbers are better" game.'



**'The ND5 XS is very close to being as good as the NDX, but add the XP5 XS power supply and the roles are reversed'**

gigabit switch – proved the most stable and reliable route in the somewhat Wi-Fi-device-heavy environment in which the Naim was tested. The idea of the switch is that the data from my NAS devices – three at the last count – goes direct to the player rather than through my main wireless router.

In fact, with wired connections for most of our computers – through a separate switch – all the wi-fi is doing most of the time is handling various handheld devices, such as the iPod Touch and iPad I used to control the Naim.

All that done, the simple sum-up is that the ND5 XS is very close to being as good as the NDX across a wide range of music. It's not quite there, the more expensive player having a rather more extended and confident bass with large-scale orchestral music, a shade more openness in the midband that simply makes voice and instruments sound just that little bit more real, and better definition in the treble.

The result, especially with higher-resolution recordings, is more than noticeable, with the NDX seeming to give the listener just a little more of everything, and thus drawing you more effectively into the music. But that shouldn't detract in any way from the

Listened to alongside the NDX – and I had both running into the amplifier at once, enabling me to flip between them – it's fascinating how close the two are.

However, once you add the XP5 XS power supply to the ND5 XS, things change: suddenly you have a player with more power and authority than the NDX can muster, along with that sense of a lifting of another veil between listener and music; tracks have more sparkle and ambience, notes attack and decay with just a little more realism, and again there's that sense of 'more of everything' that the NDX offers over the ND5 XS alone.

But then you should expect that, given that the ND5 XS/XP5 XS combination will set you back just over £500 more than the NDX. As it is, the ND5 XS will be all the player many buyers will ever want (I certainly wouldn't be disappointed if it was the only source component I had) but with the option of giving its performance a very significant boost when funds allow.

Of course, when you add the XP5 XS power supply to the NDX, things take on a whole new complexion – but maybe that's a story for another time... **G**

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## REVIEW DESKTOP SPEAKERS

# Focal XS Book

This is an affordable and extremely fine-sounding desktop solution, says **Tony Williams**

A few months back in these pages, James Vesey posed the question of whether listening to music while seated at the computer is making solitary souls of us all. I get his point, but for many listeners the computer may be a refuge from a family, or indeed the only place they have to listen.

Into this market comes French speaker company Focal, with its unusually-shaped XS Book speakers, selling for £299 and designed to be used on a shelf, wall-mounted or sitting either side of a laptop or computer monitor. They're a little taller than many a 'computer speaker', at around 28cm tall, but they're slim, bowing out to accommodate the 10cm Polyglass-cone mid/bass driver, reflex loaded and used in conjunction with a 19mm aluminium-dome tweeter to give a frequency response claimed as 50Hz-22kHz.

The front-venting port used here is no simple tube: instead Focal has used its extensive research facilities and computer-aided design to shape it for laminar flow, reducing noise while maximising its effect. The cabinet is shaped for rigidity and to reduce internal resonances, for dynamics and low coloration, while the built-in amplification – 2x20W in the right enclosure and driving both speakers – is also built for dynamic ability, crisp treble and what turns out to be a surprisingly weighty bass.

The XS Book has a single control, located atop the right speaker: push it to switch between on and standby, turn it to adjust the volume. Input into the 'master' speaker is via either a 3.5mm stereo socket or a pair of conventional RCA phono, with the connection from 'master' to 'slave' speaker on a single RCA phono. All cables are supplied and are of good quality.



### FOCAL XS BOOK DESKTOP POWERED SPEAKERS

**Drive units** 19mm aluminium dome tweeter,

10cm Polyglass-cone mid/bass unit

**Amplification** 2x20W, in right speaker

**Frequency response** 55Hz-22kHz

**Maximum SPL** 96dB (at 1m)

**Inputs** 3.5mm stereo, stereo RCA phono

**Accessories supplied** 3.5mm interconnect, stereo

RCA phono input cable, mono RCA phono connector

for left speaker, plus extension connector

**Dimensions** (HxWxD) 28.1x11.4x22cm

**focal.com**

### PERFORMANCE

The Focals deliver an impressively big sound and for some of the time I used them as my main background listening source in a reasonably large room. For that they were fine, but pushing them to fill the room with realistic listening levels revealed the limits of their amplification.

However, that's not their intended use, and when set up either side of a computer on the study desk their true charms are very apparent. The sound they deliver near-field is gloriously detailed and fluid, with a remarkable sense of stereo imaging and even depth, allied to fine bass weight and definition for speakers so compact, and a sparkling, captivating treble.

They're fully able to deliver all the swagger of the opening of Kalinnikov's First Symphony (Bakels/Malaysian Philharmonic on BIS), then give fine insight into the detail of the following movement, with uncompressed dynamics and a lovely sense of musical flow. They're also remarkably informative and involving with the interesting instrumentation and musical effects of Falvetti's *Il diluvio universale* on

Ambrony: they don't quite match the impact of hearing the work on really big speakers with some serious heft behind them, but fed with a FLAC rip of the disc from the computer or – as I tried during my reviewing period – the variable pre-outs of a number of streaming devices, they reward close up listening with masses of detail and a truly gripping presentation of this intriguing work.

Desktop speakers such as these are never going to supplant my main listening system, but for 'monitoring' while ripping or downloading music on the computer, or for those who have to listen in this way for whatever reason, the Focal XS Book speakers represent a significant bargain. **G**



### HOW TO TEST...

The Focals deliver a detailed, weighty and well-focused sound, so it's worth taking something complex and challenging to try them out: the Ambrony recording of Falvetti's *Il diluvio universale* is about as complex and challenging a set as anyone could ever want!

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# ● ESSAY

## 'Beyond the glitz of slimmer, brighter and even more 3D TVs, there are signs of a renewed interest in audio'

The recent product launches of the big names give **Andrew Everard** hope for the survival of specialist audio behind the headline-grabbing TVs and smartphones

Things are tough in the TV business – very tough. The two major players in the market – Samsung and LG – are slugging it out with wars of words, ever earlier product launches and tit-for-tat technology. Meanwhile, the once market-leading Japanese brands – the likes of Panasonic and Sony – are struggling to see any light at the end of a tunnel lined with loss-making years for their TV divisions. Others have abandoned TVs altogether, or stopped making sets and determined to have them made overseas, or simply licensed their brand names to third-party companies.

Hitachi is ceasing in-house manufacturing of TVs, Pioneer got out of the domestic TV business early and Philips – having licensed out its TV brand for the North American market – has now formed an alliance for TV manufacturing for Europe with Hong Kong-based TPV. That's an alliance in which TPV holds a 70 per cent stake, has control over manufacturing and is effectively licensing the Philips name to put on its products.

Sharp is turning over one of its latest TV factories to making displays for computers, mobile phones and tablet devices; Panasonic is looking to convert TV capacity into mobile displays or the manufacture of solar panels and plans to sell off one of its TV plants.

This is bad news, but it's bringing a renewed interest in market sectors away from the cut-throat global TV market, with its glitz of slimmer, brighter and even more 3D TVs disguising the fact that besieged manufacturers are struggling to do almost anything to convince consumers it's worth spending more.

3D TVs that manufacturers hoped would still be selling for £2000 or so can now be had for less than half that and I recently saw an offer for a 42in LED-lit full HD 3D TV, complete with the ability to record live TV to an external memory store, at just £400.

So, 3D didn't work – how about 'smart' TV? Connect your TV to the internet and you can surf, Skype, commit your thoughts to Facebook or tweet – and all while watching TV. Hopes are high among the makers that these 'connected' TVs will be the next big – ie premium-priced – thing, but if that doesn't pan out, the few companies standing still have



Yes, it's a new iPod dock: made by Samsung, it's finished in wood and valve-powered

OLED technology, making superthin TVs possible, up their sleeves. If that doesn't do it, there's 4K TV, with four times the resolution of current HD. And so on and so on...

One effect of all this is that manufacturers are now looking again at other product areas they once neglected. Who would have thought, for example, that Sony might not only introduce a pair of speakers with a \$27,000 price tag, but follow it up with a smaller, slightly more affordable model, making it clear it's committed to the high-end audio market?

That's just what has happened: last year's SS-AR1 speakers have been followed by the SS-AR2, again with enclosures made from Nordic birch and a maple finish sourced from Hokkaido and with design tweaks such as a midrange driver with a sliced-through cone and a sub-enclosure within to isolate the bass drivers from the midrange and tweeter.

Of course this isn't Sony's first 'statement' speaker design: the dedicated team of audio engineers just occasionally let slip one of these remarkable products, almost under the radar while all the attention is focused on 3D this or LED that or tablet something or other else.

However, nothing could have prepared us for the products Korean rival Samsung revealed as a sidebar to its plans for global domination in TVs, smartphones, tablets and seemingly everything else. Oh, and fridges.

'No, this isn't some retro nod to the steampunk trend, but rather a perfectly modern speaker dock system – just with valves'

It has a couple of dock systems and, being Samsungs, they work with both Apple devices and Samsung's own Galaxy models. But one of them, the DA-E750, is valve-powered!

No, this isn't some retro nod to the steampunk trend of taking modern appliances and making them look like some cross between Brunel and Pugin, but rather a perfectly modern speaker dock system – just with valves.

What's more, it's a combination of ancient and modern: the valves are in the preamp stage, while the power amplification is digital, giving what Samsung describes as 'a digital amplifier's sharp clarity combined with rich and warm sound performance of vacuum tubes – to produce a pure listening experience to please any audiophile'.

Somehow, while there's thinking like that going on behind the scenes of all the eye-popping special effects of 3D TVs, ever-slimmer screens and the hell-for-leather product replacement cycles of smartphones, there's hope for the audio industry yet. **G**



A black and white close-up portrait of Sir Anthony Hopkins. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. His right hand is raised to his ear, with fingers slightly curled. He is wearing a dark shirt and a metal watch on his right wrist. The background is a plain, light color.

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# NOTES & LETTERS

Lionel Rogg on record • Cellos in Mozart's divertimentos • Multi-miking rights and wrongs

## Haydn premiere – on disc

The production of Haydn's 1791 London opera *L'anima del filosofo, ossia Orfeo ed Euridice* in Florence in June 1951, mentioned by Richard Wigmore (February, page 86), was indeed the work's stage premiere. It was not actually its first performance. That had taken place in Vienna the previous December, in a studio recording for HC Robbins Landon's Haydn Society of Boston.

The Maggio Musicale performances in Florence, with Maria Callas and Erich Kleiber, were a spin-off from the Haydn Society's painstaking reconstruction of the complete opera from scattered sources for its recording. Made using Vienna State Opera forces under the baton of Hans Swarowsky, with Herbert Handt and Judith Hellwig in the title-roles and a youthful Walter Berry as Pluto, the recording was released, ahead of the Florence performances, in May 1951 (HSLP2029, three LPs). *Gramophone* reviewed the subsequent UK (Nixa) release in October 1952.

While the opera as a whole had lain unperformed after a bewildered Haydn was forced to abandon it when it was already in rehearsal in London in May 1791, the composer may have salvaged some consolation in his Hanover Square concert at the end of that month if, as conjectured by Robbins Landon, an aria then sung by Nancy Storace (the first Susanna in Mozart's *Figaro*) was perhaps Euridice's death scene, 'Del mio core'. In 1925 that aria was recorded by the South African contralto Jenny Sonnenberg (Polydor 78rpm 66083).

The Haydn Society's historic 1950 recording of the complete opera, unique in that it is, quite literally, the only existing premiere of a Haydn opera, is now preserved on Music & Arts CD1250 (two discs).

*AA Cane*

*Newtown, NSW, Australia*

## Vinyl addiction

I have enjoyed your recent glimpses into the past via the 'Gramophone Archive' column in Reviews. The most exciting thing for me was the sight of the small, black circle signifying that most satisfying of media – vinyl. I enjoy a regular influx of vinyl, both second-hand and new, in many genres. Buying second-hand records seems to lead to unexpected acquisitions – a recording

## Letter of the Month



Masterly: Schubert in 'Auf dem Strom'

## Schubert's best-kept secret

Richard Wigmore's excellent article on Schubert's final year (March, page 22) was a real delight and informative, with the works so well put in the context of his life and declining health. I was so pleased to see proper mention of Schubert's best-kept secret – his song 'Auf dem Strom'. This is a masterly work, perhaps not plumbing the emotional depths of *Winterreise*, which preceded it, or a few of the later songs included in *Schwanengesang*, but certainly standing on an equal footing with many of the Rellstab songs included in his last song-cycle.

His great friend Josef von Spaun, who knew him from the age of 11, when they played in the same student orchestra, described this song as 'magnificent'. Ironically, its most original feature – the inclusion of a beautiful horn part which weaves in and out of the vocal

line and combines with the piano to set the scene, link the verses and reflect the emotions of lost love – is also the reason why it is so little performed, so rarely recorded and, in all probability, the only reason why Haslinger did not include it in *Schwanengesang*. Its contrapuntal character is more classical than much of late Schubert but the overall effect is of a trio of immense sinuous beauty. Anyone who is unfamiliar with this great song has a real treat in store and should seek it out!

One reason I know this song is that I have a young horn-playing son who, knowing my love for it, included it as a surprise in a recital he gave when he left school. I was even given a specially doctored programme so that I did not know it was coming.

*Hugh Savill*

*Stoodleigh, Devon, UK*

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of Britten's cantata *St Nicolas* or a Monteverdi *Magnificat*.

The appearance of the vinyl emblem within the pages of *Gramophone* set me thinking. There are many aficionados of the 12" disc out there whose preferred medium of reproduction is vinyl. I am sure they would appreciate information regarding recent classical releases on record. How about a quarterly round-up of such releases within the magazine to satisfy the cravings of those touched by the affliction?

Nigel Evans

Three Crosses, Swansea, UK

## Rogg's records unreleased

Reading about the 'Hall of Fame' (March, page 3) reminded me of letters published in the early days of CD under the title of 'Eurydice'. Readers were invited to submit a short list of favourite LP (or earlier) recordings which they would like to see reissued in the (then) new format.

Seeing Lionel Rogg's name among your famed organists brought back memories of treasured recordings which seem never to have reappeared on CD. I think naturally of his first Bach cycle for Oryx on the Metzler organ in Zurich's Grossmünster (only a few excerpts seem to have resurfaced occasionally). But where are his Hindemith sonatas (also Oryx, on the same instrument), *The Art of Fugue* or 'Buxtehude and his Contemporaries' (both EMI, on Metzler organs in Geneva and Baden)? There was also a disc entitled 'The Virginalists' on RCA, played on a Ruckers-Taskin harpsichord and an unidentified 16th-century chamber organ which the *Gramophone* review aptly referred to as a 'miniature kist o' whistles with a rather charming clicking action'.

I never contributed to the 'Eurydice' series; I had the impression that all my old favourites would turn up in time. Perhaps the moment has come to renew this feature in your letters column.

Bruce Fox-Lefriche

Bourg-en-Bresse, France

## Bach revelation shared

Ending an issue of *Gramophone* with 'My Music' has always been like having the cake's icing last. Reading Robert Klein's memoir (February, page 130), a once fellow New Yorker, was truly an unexpected pleasure, since I too was led on to the road of a lifelong serious listener to classical music, especially choral, by an early special experience with Bach's B minor Mass. I was 18, while Mr Klein was 22. Rarely does one recall a concert performance with emotional detail



Memorable: Karl Richter's debut at Carnegie Hall

from nearly a half century ago but both of us do, and both of us were in the very same venue, Carnegie Hall, listening to Karl Richter's first outing in the US. Often friends have heard me tell of the experience and today I have heard from a fellow attendee – in print! And now my account has an enhanced ending.

Raymond V Giordano

Southampton, Hants, UK

## Bass concerns

'No cello?' asks Nalen Anthoni, apropos the Scottish Chamber Orchestra soloists' superb performance of Mozart's Divertimento, K334 (February, page 62). But Mozart did not envisage a cello in K334 or its associated divertimentos. Imagine a performance in some rich family's garden. First the musicians process out, playing the March, K445, the bass player carrying his instrument before him by means of a strap – an undignified process which lets him play in one position. Then the Divertimento is performed, all the participants standing up to play. Finally the bassist takes up his unwieldy burden again and the players march off.

There is no room in this scenario for a cellist, who would have to be seated. And yet some spoilsports have suggested that when Mozart writes 'bass' on such scores, he can just as easily mean a cello, or cello and bass combined. My instincts tell me that no cello is required, and there is plentiful evidence that the typical 'serenade' combination of strings was simply violins, viola and bass. Mozart refers to these works in his letters as 'cassations', which implies he was thinking of outdoor performance (*cassatio* comes from *Gasse*, meaning street). Take another lovely Mozart work, the *Serenata notturna*, K239. It is unusual in several ways. First, along with its basic string orchestra, it calls for timpani

without trumpets. Second, as it was written for New Year's Day 1776, it must have been intended for indoor performance – so Mozart could have had a seated cello soloist if he had wanted one. But no, his designated soloists are the classic line-up of two violins, viola and double bass. A contemporary drawing of musicians playing the satirical *Ein musikalischer Spass*, K522, makes it clear that no cello was involved in the performance, just two violins, viola, double bass and two horns.

Incidentally, although the Vienna Octet generally included a redundant cello, they left it out of their mono recording of K287, now available on Eloquence. Is it just coincidence that this is the most magical of all their Mozart divertimento performances? Today's expert bassists can provide a much more flexible bass-line if they are not constantly having to synchronise with an unnecessary cellist. Ensembles of two violins, viola and double-bass can still be heard in Vienna. Sometimes they ring the changes by having three violins and no viola. Tully Potter, via email

## English Music

While I agree with many of the sentiments expressed by John Tebbit who laments the lack of English Music in the London orchestral music programme for this season (Letters, January), I hasten to reassure him that the situation is not quite as dire as he may think. Take Walton as an example. We have had excellent performances in London recently of his Violin Concerto (Midori), his Viola Concerto (Antoine Tamestit) and his magnificent First Symphony (NYOGB, Paul Daniel), as well as *Belsazzar's Feast*, of course. However, he is quite right that much more needs to be done...and is being done!

For example, the English Music Festival (EMF) was founded to redress the imbalance in the concert scene and bring to live audiences works by British composers. The EMF has covered music by all the composers cited by Mr Tebbit and staged the world-premiere performances of, for



English Music Festival: championing RVW in 2011



example, Bowen's First Symphony, Delius's *Hiawatha*, Gurney's Violin Sonata, songs by Britten, piano music by Holbrooke and (last year) Vaughan Williams's early masterpiece *The Garden of Proserpine*. This year will see works by Alwyn, Ireland, Finzi, Delius and Holst, and world-premiere performances of Vaughan Williams's piano Fantasy, Moeran's reconstructed Second Symphony and Sachererell Coke's Violin Sonata. All this without a penny of public money!

One would hope that other concert promoters will now follow the example set by the EMF (whose concerts regularly sell out, demonstrating the interest that there is in this genre) – but it is reassuring to know that, in the meantime, English music is in safe hands.

David Green

Fakenham, Norfolk, UK

## Translations online

Richard Wigmore, in his review of 'Wanderer', Christoph Prégardien's recital disc (February, page 81) points out that, for the Killmayer settings of texts by Hölderlin, no translations are provided. What is more, apparently no translations are easily available on the net. Being of the firm belief that without a sense of the poetry of a song's text no singer or listener can enjoy a full appreciation of a song, I have now posted my English versions of the four poems involved on my song-text translation (open access) website URiTEXT ([uritext.co.uk](http://uritext.co.uk)).

Uri Liebrecht

London, UK

## Miking up

Reading 'Purity & Power' (January, page 20) about 10 of the millennium's new concert halls, I wondered how they sound for broadcast concerts and recordings, bearing in mind a letter from a reader in January 2011 who thought that many recordings from various halls all sounded the same, eliminating their ambient 'sound'. So I was disappointed to read that Yasuhisa Toyota, the acoustics expert, said, 'But finding the ideal position for the microphone...is not our job'. What a pity!

Judging by photographs of recording sessions, it seems that the use of numerous microphones is now the norm, somewhat like 'sound reinforcement' for a stage musical or jazz concert. I believe that these multi-microphone techniques are wrong as they do not convey a true stereophonic image, eliminate the character of the hall and upset the natural balance.

You also published a letter about the multi-microphone techniques being used by the BBC for television broadcasts from the Proms, where almost every instrument has

its own microphone – the 'balance' in effect being adjusted by an engineer rather than by the conductor, with the result that the acoustic signature of the hall is excluded. But the BBC said that the sound for television 'has to be different'; because of all the camera angles, they think that the sound has to be continually adjusted 'to fit the picture'. A misguided disaster!

But at concerts that are being broadcast live on radio, one generally sees a simple 'stereo pair' of microphones, with a spare pair behind, suspended from what one assumes is the optimal point for the best sound – a few other microphones being judiciously positioned for a chorus, for example. I firmly believe that concert hall acousticians ought to pinpoint the ideal microphone position for stereo, and for multi-channel, where the spacial reality can be better portrayed. As in 3D photography, only a pair of lenses is needed. Less is more!

There is a well-regarded set of the Mahler symphonies recorded by Denon in the 1980s with the Frankfurt RSO and Eliahu Inbal using just a stereo pair of microphones, which shows just how well it can be done. Perhaps *Gramophone* could commission an article from one or two of the best and most notable freelance recording engineers and producers to give their views on this matter.

Humphrey Britton-Johnson

Eastnor, Ledbury, Herefordshire, UK

## Editorial note

Microphones may have been up for Stephen Hough's performance of Rachmaninov's First Piano Concerto ('In the Studio', March, page 71) but they were to record the Strauss elsewhere in the concert, not the Rachmaninov, of which Hough has, of course, already made a much-acclaimed recording for Hyperion (A/05).

## NEXT MONTH

We reveal the first 50 people – musicians, producers, engineers and executives – who you've voted to welcome into the *Gramophone* Hall of Fame of recorded music

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# OBITUARY

## PAAVO BERGLUND

*Conductor*

*Born April 14, 1929*

*Died January 25, 2012*

Paavo Berglund started his musical life as a violinist – which, unusually, he played left-handed – joining the Finnish RSO in 1949. In 1952 he founded the Helsinki Chamber Orchestra and started conducting, and by 1956 he'd been appointed associate conductor of the Finnish RSO, assuming the chief job in 1962.

For British audiences, and record collectors in general, his years with the Bournemouth SO (1972-79) were significant. He raised the standard of the playing and started to record regularly for EMI. It was with Bournemouth that he recorded the first of his three Sibelius symphony cycles (the other two were with the Helsinki PO – of which he was music director 1975-9 – and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe). Notable in this first cycle was the inclusion of the *Kullervo* Symphony, the work's first recording.

Berglund sometimes courted controversy with his retouching of orchestral parts; as he said in a *Gramophone* interview in 1978, 'Sibelius was a superb orchestrator, but right up to the very end he made strange dynamics which I find I have to change.' His passionate approach to the score brought him admiration from fellow Finns Jukka-Pekka Saraste and Osmo Vänskä, as well as from one of the UK's finest Sibelians, Sir Simon Rattle.

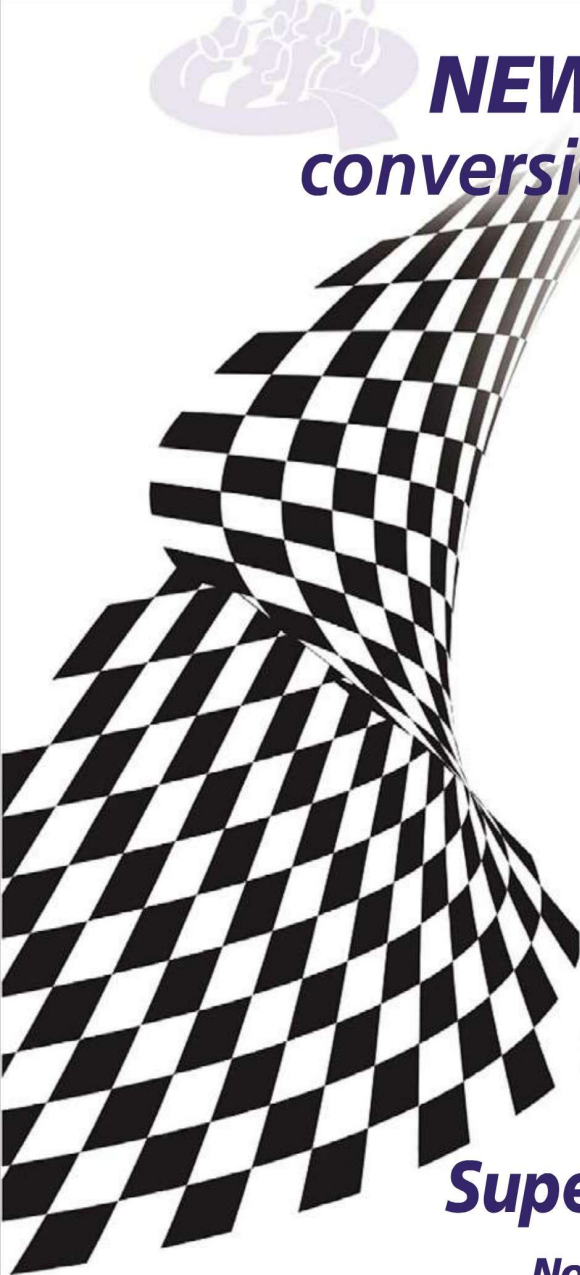
Later posts included principal conductor of the Royal Stockholm PO (1987-91) and Royal Danish Orchestra (1993-98). Among his last recordings were two sets with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe that allowed the ensemble's size to bring a transparency to the sound – the symphonies of Brahms (Ondine) and his third Sibelius symphony cycle (Finlandia). **James Jolly**



Paavo Berglund: admired for his Sibelius



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Bach, JS Va da gamba Sons. *Boulanger, L/De Pasquale.* ② ALPHA161

Mazzocchi Catena d'Adone. *Scherzi Musicali/Achten.* ② ALPHA184

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Schubert Sym Nos 4, 8 & 9 (r1957-60). *Klemperer.* ② ANDRC9106

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### BIS

Albéniz Pf Wks, Vol 7. *Baselga.* ② BIS-SACD1953

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Bach, CPE Kybd Sons. *Belder.* ② 94320

Khachaturian Ballet Stes. *Bolshoi Th Orch/Svetlanov.* ② 9256

Prokofiev Ballet Stes. *Novosibirsk SO/Katz.* ② 9254

Purcell Fairy Queen. *Sols incl Sampson, Carwood & Bundy/* ② 94221

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Rossini Armida. *Sols incl Gasdia & Merit/Solisti Veneti/* ② 94222

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Strauss, R Rosenkavalier. *Sols incl Lear, Bastin & Von Stadel/* ② 9248

Rotterdam PO/De Waart. ② 9248

Tippett Stg Qts Nos 1-4. *Britten Qt.* ② 9257

Wranitzky, A Stg Qnt. *Stg Sextet. Ens Cordia.* ② 94168

Various Cpsrs All in a Garden Green. *Ens Le Tendre Amour.* ② 94313

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Poulenc Cpte Chbr Wks. *London Conchord Ens.* ② CHRCDO28

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Benjamin, A. *Lucas Film Wks. BBC NOW/Gamba.* ② CHAN10713

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Mozart 'Coronation' Mass. *Ch of St John's Coll, Cambridge/* ② CHAN0786

Nethsingha. ② CHAN0786

Wagner Orch Wks, Vol 5. *RSNO/Järvi, N.* ② CHSA5097

Various Cpsrs British Cl Sons. *Collins/McHale.* ② CHAN10704

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Bach, CPE Israeliten in der Wüste. *Sols/Salzburger Hofmusik/* ② CPO777 560-2

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### CRYSTAL

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Various Cpsrs Friedrich II und seine Hofkomponisten. *CPE Bach CO/Haenchen.* ② N67087

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**Marco** Gtr Wks. *Fantoni.* **CD5708**  
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**Jenkins, K** Peacemakers. *LSO/Jenkins.* **084173-2**  
**Various** Cpsrs Red Piano. *Yundi.* **088658-2**

**FESTIVO**

*festivo.nl*  
**Guilmant** Pièces dans différents styles, Vol 5. *Van Vliet.* **FES6962322**

**FLORA**

*labelflora.net*  
**Bach, JS** Six Sons for Vn & Hpd. *Fernandez/Alard/Pierlot.* **FLORA1909**  
**Frescobaldi** Liquide perle. *Pessi/Egüez.* **FLORA1106**  
**Jenkins, J** Pleasing Slumber. *Gent/Lischka/Guerrier/Pierlot.* **FLORA1809**  
**Marais** Charivary - Stes. *Pierlot/Zipperling/Gratton/Egüez.* **FLORA1507**  
**Monteverdi** Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda. **FLORA1709**  
*Sacqueboutiers.* **FLORA1709**  
**Mozart** Pf Qts. *Vodenitcharov/Terakado/Fernandez/Zipperling.* **FLORA1607**  
**Various** Cpsrs Abel en Norvège. *Okland/Seitz/Pierlot.* **FLORA1307**  
**Various** Cpsrs Amarante: Airs de cour. *Scheen/Egüez/Pierlot.* **FLORA2210**  
**Various** Cpsrs Concert pour Mme de Sévigné. *Hantail/Barthel/Egüez/Pierlot.* **FLORA2110**  
**Various** Cpsrs Rabelais - Fay ce que voudras. *Sacqueboutiers/Ens Clément Janequin/Visse.* **FLORA2410**  
**Various** Cpsrs Sacquebout. *Sacqueboutiers.* **FLORA2310**

**FRYDERYK CHOPIN INSTITUTE**

*nifc.pl*  
**Dobrzyński, Lessele** Pf Concs. *Shelley/Sinf Varsovia.* **NIFCCD101**

**FUGA LIBERA**

*outhere-music.com/fugalibera*  
**Martinů** Vn Conc No 2. Sym No 1. *Gatto/Belgian Nat Orch/Weller.* **FUG589**

**GENUIN**

*genuin.de*  
**Beethoven** Pf Trios. *Trio Ex Aequo.* **GEN12217**  
**Fauré, Prokofiev, Tchaikovsky** Orch Wks. *Dresden PO/Sanderling, M.* **GEN12238**  
**Wetzel** Lieder. *Vermeulen/Schone/Vlad/Stan.* **GEN12223**  
**Various** Cpsrs Recital Experience. *Weimar Wind Ens.* **GEN12225**

**THE GIFT OF MUSIC**

*thegiftofmusic.com*  
**Various** Cpsrs Flying High. *Various artists.* **CCLCDG1262**  
**Various** Cpsrs Good Sport. *Various artists.* **CCLCDG1261**  
**Various** Cpsrs Medieval Muse. *Serendipity.* **CCLCDG1259**  
**Various** Cpsrs Royal Fanfare. *Various artists.* **CCLCDG1263**  
**Various** Cpsrs Solace. *Magdala.* **CCLCDG1260**

**GLOBE**

*globerecords.nl*  
**Kellner** Phantasia - Lte Wks. *Moreno.* **GCD0920112**  
**Various** Cpsrs Tehilim. *Nexer/Netherlands Chbr Ch/Stok.* **GLO5247**

**GLOSSA**

*glossamusic.com*  
**Striggio** Mass for 40 & 60 Voices. *Concert Spirituel/Niquet.* **GCD5A921623**

**GRAND PIANO**

**Raff** Pf Wks, Vol 1. *Nguyen.* **GP602**  
**Saint-Saëns** Pf Wks, Vol 1. *Burleson.* **GP601**  
**Schulhoff** Pf Wks, Vol 1. *Weichert.* **GP604**  
**Weinberg** Pf Wks, Vol 1. *Brewster Franzetti.* **GP603**

**GUILD**

*guildmusic.com*  
**Andreae, V** Sym in C. *Bournemouth SO/Andreae, M.* **GMCD7377**

**Berg** Vn Conc *Hindemith* Sym Metamorphoses (pp1938-49). **GHCD2372**  
*Krasner/Busch, F.* **GHCD2372**  
**Ewers** Squaring the Circle. *Gemini Ens.* **GMCD7379**  
**Marek** Orch Wks. *Turban/Philh Orch/Brain, G.* **GMCD7360/61**

**Suter** Hommage à RS. *Sutter/Leon.* **GMCD7382**  
**Various** Cpsrs Full of Grace: Songs to the Virgin Mary. **GMCD7380**  
*Fairhaven Sgrs/Woodward.* **GMCD7380**

**Various** Cpsrs Golden Age of Light Music, Vol 87: Light & Easy. **GLCD5187**  
*Various artists.* **GLCD5187**

**Various** Cpsrs Golden Age of Light Music, Vol 88: Art of the Arranger, Vol 1. *Various artists.* **GLCD5188**

**Various** Cpsrs Golden Age of Light Music, Vol 89: Holidays for Stgs. *Various artists.* **GLCD5189**

**Various** Cpsrs Golden Age of Light Music, Vol 90: Continental Flavour, Vol 2. *Various artists.* **GLCD5190**

**Various** Cpsrs Orch Wks (pp1929-52). *Toscanini.* **GHCD2384/5**

**Various** Cpsrs Poetry in Music - Pf Wks. *Wiesli.* **GMCD7374**

**HÄNSSLER CLASSIC**

*haenssler-classic.de*  
**Montsalvatge** Canciones & Conciertos. *Pine/Duchovna/Linn/NDR Rad PO/Antunes.* **CD98 642**  
**Britten** Vc Sym *Shostakovich* Vc Conc No 1. *Moser/WDR SO, Cologne/Inkinen.* **CD98 643**

**Schubert** Pf Wks, Vol 7. *Oppitz.* **CD98 569**

**HARMONIA MUNDI**

*harmoniamundi.com*  
**Beethoven, Berg** Vn Concs. *Faust/Orch Mozart/Abbado.* **HMC90 2105**

**Schubert** Willkommen und Abschied. *Güra/Berner.* **HMC90 2112**

**Shostakovich** Pf Concs. Vn Son. *Melnikov/Faust/Mahler CO/Currentzis.* **HMC90 2104**

**Ysaÿe** Solo Vn Sons. *Murray, T.* **HMU90 7569**  
**Various** Cpsrs Solo Ob. *Moinet.* **HMC90 2118**  
**Various** Cpsrs Tune thy Music to thy Hart. *Stile Antico/Fretwork.* **HMU80 7554**

**HERESY**

**Various** Cpsrs Ecstasy. *Dúla.* **HERESY002**  
**Various** Cpsrs Shipwrecked. *eX.* **HERESY001**

**HORTUS**

*editionshortus.com*  
**Magnard** Vc Son. Pf Wks. *Meunier/Guilhon-Herbert.* **HOR085**  
**Mallie** Affettuoso. *Schelcher/Lecouff/Mallie.* **HOR091**  
**Saint-Saëns** Cpte Pièces d'orgue & Motets, Vol 1. *Genvrin/Sacrum Ch/Veismanis.* **HOR911**

**HYPERION**

*hyperion-records.co.uk*  
**Achron** Stes for Vn & Pf. *Shaham, H/Erez.* **CDA67841**  
**Chilcott** Requiem. Chor Wks. *Wells Cath Ch/Owens.* **CDA67650**

**Chisholm** Pf Concs. *Driver/BBC Scottish SO/Macdonald, R.* **CDA67880**

**Debussy** Songs, Vol 2. *Anderson, L/Milne, L/Martineau.* **CDA67883**

**Hansson** Endless Border - Chor Wks. *Royal Holloway Ch/Gough.* **CDA67881**

**Howells** Requiem. Chor Wks. *Trinity Coll Ch, Cambridge/Layton.* **CDA67914**

**Kalkbrenner** Pf Concs Nos 2 & 3. *Shelley/Tasmanian SO.* **CDA67843**

**Medtner** Arabesques. *Elegies. Milne.* **CDA67851/2**  
**Spohr** Syms Nos 7 & 9. *Svizzera Italiana Orch/Shelley.* **CDA67939**

**Turina** Chbr Wks. *Nash Ens.* **CDA67889**

**ICA CLASSICS**

*icartists.co.uk*  
**Beethoven** Eroica Vars *Schumann* Pf Conc (pp1957-58). **ICAC5062**  
*Fischer, A/Cologne Rad SO/Keilberth.* **ICAC5062**  
**Brahms** Sym No 3 *Elgar* Sym No 1 (pp1976-77). *BBC SO/Boult.* **ICAC5063**  
**Verdi** Falstaff (pp1955). *Sols incl Corena & Oncina/RPO/Giulini.* **ICAC5061**

**INDÉSENS** *indesens.fr*  
**Tomas** Cpte Wks with Tpt. *Aubier.* **INDE038**

**JADE**

**Salesses** Je m'appelle Bernadette - OST. *Toulouse Orch/Lavaud-Bach.* **JADE699746-2**

**Various** Cpsrs African Gospel. *La Grâce Ch/Toko.* **JADE699745-2**

**Various** Cpsrs Marie, Fleur du Carmel. *Carmel Ch.* **JADE699742-2**

**K617** *cd-baroque.com*  
**Various** Cpsrs A due cembali: Caprices.... *Zylberajch/Gester.* **K617 233**

**LAWO**

*lawa.no*  
**Brahms** Va Sons, Op 120. *Landaas/Horton.* **LWC1027**  
**Brustad, Mozart, Halvorsen** Vn & Va Duos. *Batnes/Landaas.* **LWC1028**

**LINN** *linnrecords.com*  
**Bach, JS** Vc Stes. *Tunnicliffe.* **CKD396**

**LPO** *lpo.co.uk*  
**Ravel** Daphnis et Chloé (pp1979). *LPO/Haitink.* **LMPO0059**

**LSO LIVE** *lso.co.uk*  
**Nielsen** Syms Nos 1 & 6 (pp2011). *LSO/Davis C, B.* **LSO0715**

**MARIINSKY**

*mariinskylabell.com*  
**Shostakovich** Pf Concs *Shchedrin* Pf Conc No 5. *Matsuev/Mariinsky Orch/Gergiey.* **MAR0509**

**MERIDIAN**

*meridian-records.co.uk*  
**Bach, CPE, Telemann** Godfather - Wks for Fl, Hpd & Continuo. **CDE84605**  
*Fontegara.* **CDE84605**  
**Stephenson** Concs for Vc & Db. *Martens/Bosch/Cape PO/Stephenson.* **CDE84602**

**Various** Cpsrs Spirit of Christmas Present. *Elysian Sgrs of London/Laughton.* **CDE84601**

**MIRARE** *mirare.fr*  
**Couperin, F** Apothéoses. *Ricercar Consort/Pierlot.* **MIR150**

**MOVIESCORE MEDIA** *moviescoremedia.com*  
**Doyle** Man to Man - OST. *Various artists.* **MMS11022**  
**Kamen** Back to Goya. *Various artists.* **MMS12001**

**MUSO**  
**Various** Cpsrs Ysaÿe and Queen Elisabeth Vn Competition 75th Anniversary. *Various artists.* **MU002**

**MYRIOS** *myriosmusic.com*  
**Brahms** Cl Qnt *Grieg* Stg Qt. *Widmann, J/Hagen Qt.* **MYR007**

**MYTO**

**Bellini** Puritani (pp1960). *Sols incl Gencer, Raimondi & Aussensi/Colón Th, Buenos Aires/Quadri.* **MCD00298**

**Strauss, R** Salome (sung in Italian: pp1952). *Sols incl Djanel, Gobbi & Tasso/Turin SO/Sanzogno.* **MCD00301**

**Strauss, R** Schweigsame Frau (pp1961). *Sols incl Böhme, Horáková & Wunderlich/Colón Th, Buenos Aires/Wallberg.* **MCD00295**

**Wagner** Walküre (pp1958). *Sols incl Suthaus, Frick & Hotter/La Scala, Milan/Karajan.* **MCD00185**

**NAXOS** *naxos.com*  
**Alwyn** Film Wks. *RNCM Wind Orch/Rundell/Heron.* **S 8572747**  
**Bach, JS** Orch transcs by Elgar, Respighi et al. *Talvi/Seattle SO/Schwarz.* **S 8572741**

**Davies, PM** Sym No 1. *Mavis in Las Vegas. BBC PO/Davies.* **S 8572348**

**Dove** Passing of the Year. *Convivium Sgrs/Ferris.* **S 8572733**  
**Goossens** Cpte Wks for Vn & Pf. *Gibbs/Fenyő.* **S 8572860**

**Handel** Theodora. *Wieland/Frankfurt Baroque Orch/Martin.* **S 8572700/02**

**Harris, Ross** Syms Nos 2 & 3. *Pierard/Auckland PO/Letonja.* **S 8572574**

**Rimsky-Korsakov** Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh. *Vedernikov.* **S 8660288/90**

**Salva** Vc Conc. *Prochac/Slovak Rad SO/Lejava.* **S 8572509**

**Sarasate** Bolero. *Serenade andalouse. Yang, T/Hadulla.* **S 8570893**

**Séverac** Pf Wks. *Masó.* **S 8572428**  
**Tchaikovsky** My First Tchaikovsky Album. *Various artists.* **S 8578214**

**Verdi** Ballet Wks from Ops. *Bournemouth SO/Serebrier.* **S 8572818/19; F NBD0027**

**Various** Cpsrs Converging Culture. *Hamilton/New Lone Star PO.* **S 8572837**

**Various** Cpsrs Cpte Recs, Vol 4 (r1916-19). *Kreisler.* **S 8572837**

**Various** Cpsrs McCormack, Vol 9 (1920-23). *McCormack.* **S 8572837**

**Various** Cpsrs My First Ballet Album. *Various artists.* **S 8578205**

**Various** Cpsrs My First Lullaby Album. *Various artists.* **S 8578213**

**Various** Cpsrs My First Violin Album. *Various artists.* **S 8578215**

**NEWTON CLASSICS**

*newtonclassics.com*  
**Bartók** Cpte Stg Qts. *Guarneri Qt.* **B 8802111**  
**Bottesini** Wks for Db & Pf. *Sciascia/Leonardi.* **B 8802105**  
**Castellnuovo-Tedesco** Gtr Sons. *Samuelli.* **B 8802106**  
**Donizetti** Sons. *Waltzes. Dessi/Calabretto/Nadai.* **B 8802107**

**Geminiani** Pièces de clavecin. *Lanfranco.* **B 8802108**

**Steiner, Waxman** Film Wks. *Nat PO/Gerhardt.* **S 8802104**

**Vivaldi** Concs. *Sons. Milan Sols/Ephrigan.* **S 8802109**

**NEW WORLD**

*newworldrecords.org*  
**Joplin** Treemonisha. *Sols/Paragon Ragtime Orch/Benjamin, R.* **NW80720**

**Various** Cpsrs Modern American Bass. *Black/McDonald.* **NW80722**

**NIMBUS**

*wyastone.co.uk*  
**Haydn** A l'anglaise. *Café Mozart.* **N16174**  
**Vivaldi** Vivaldi's Children - Concs, Op 10. *Boustany.* **N16167**

**Various** Cpsrs Sounds from Within. *Boustany/Warzycki.* **N16166**

**Various** Cpsrs Wandering Winds. *Boustany/Clayton/Dall'Olio.* **N16169**

**NMC**

*nmcrc.co.uk*  
**Finnissy** Stg Qts Nos 2 & 3. *Kreutzer Qt.* **NMCD180**

**Knussen** Syms Nos 2 & 3. *London Sinfonietta/Philh Orch/Knussen/Tilson Thomas.* **NMCD175**

**OEHMS CLASSICS**

*oehmclassics.de*  
**Tchaikovsky** Sym No 5. *Gürzenich Orch, Cologne/Kitaenko.* **OC667**

**ONDINE**

*ondine.net*  
**Rautavaara** Modificata. *Mørk/Carrie/Helsinki PO.* **ODE1178-2**

**Saariaho** Orch Wks. *Various artists.* **ODE1113-2Q**

**Scriabin** Etudes. *Preludes. Mustonen.* **ODE1184-2**

**ONYX**

*onyxclassics.com*  
**Rachmaninov** Pf Conc No 3 *Rubinstein* Pf Conc No 4. *Moog/German Rhineland-Palatinate St PO/Milton.* **ONYX4089**

**Various** Cpsrs Music from the Machine Age. *Borusan Istanbul PO/Goetzel.* **ONYX4086**

**OPERA AUSTRALIA**

*opera-australia.org.au*  
**Delibes** Lakmé (pp1976). *Sols incl Sutherland/Op Australia/Bonyng.* **OPO256012CD**

**Sullivan** Mikado (pp2011). *Sols incl Alexander, Breen & Fiebig/Op Australia/Castles-Onion.* **OPO256016CD**

**Verdi** Rigoletto (pp2010). *Sols incl Opie & Matthews, E/Op Australia/Reggoli.* **OPO256011CD**

**Verdi** Trovatore (pp1983). *Sols incl Sutherland/Op Australia/Bonyng.* **OPO256013CD**



## NEW RELEASES INDEX

**ORANGE MOUNTAIN MUSIC** [orangemountainmusic.com](http://orangemountainmusic.com)  
Glass In the Penal Colony. *Music Th Wales/Rafferty.*

② OMM0078

**ORCHID** [orchidclassics.com](http://orchidclassics.com)  
Various Cpsrs Serious Cabaret. *Carewe/Mayers.*

② ORC100021

**OUR RECORDINGS** [ourrecordings.com](http://ourrecordings.com)  
Poulenc Half Monk, Half Rascal: Unacc Chor Wks. *Danish Nat Voc Ens/Layton.*

② 8 226906

**PAN CLASSICS**  
Mahler Sym No 9. *Badische Staatskapelle Karlsruhe.*

② PC10262

Mendelssohn. Schubert Pf Trios. *Voces Intimae.*

② PC10263

**PENTATONE** [pentatonemusic.com](http://pentatonemusic.com)  
Dvořák Stg Qnt. Nocturne. Scherzo. *Berlin Philh Stg Qnt.*

② PTC5186 458

Grieg. Rachmaninov Pf Concs. *Chen/Gulbenkian Orch/ Foster, L.*

② PTC5186 444

Tchaikovsky Sym No 1. Slavonic March. *Russian Nat Orch/ Pletnev.*

② PTC5186 381

**PHAEDRA** [phaedracd.com](http://phaedracd.com)  
Glinka Treasures for Pf. *Loguinova.*

② PH292026

Various Cpsrs Chor Wks from Poland & Belgium. *Biako/Polish Rad Ch, Kraków/Engels, H.*

② PH92072

Various Cpsrs Flowers for Bcl. *Guns/Koszushko/Rommes/ Moscow CO.*

② PH92073

**PIANO 21** [cyprienkatsaris.net](http://cyprienkatsaris.net)  
Chopin Pf Wks. *Katsaris.*

② P21 043

**PRAGA DIGITALS** [pragadigitals.com](http://pragadigitals.com)  
Various Cpsrs Russian Season - Chbr Wks. *Various artists.*

② PRD350 055

**PREISER** [preiserrecords.at](http://preiserrecords.at)  
Liszt. Chopin At the Scottish Abbey. *Ferenčíková.*

② PR91199

Liszt. Wagner Im Cosmos der Romantik. *Linhar/Elchinger.*

② PR90801

**PROFIL** [haensslerprofil.de](http://haensslerprofil.de)  
Beethoven. Furtwängler Vn Sons. *Moser/Huhn.*

② PH11048

Baird. Braunsfels. Mozart Orch Wks. *Wand.*

② PH06004

**QUERSTAND**  
Bruckner Sym No 3. *Leipzig Gewandhaus Orch/Blomstedt.*

② VKJK1017

Bruckner Sym No 8. *Leipzig Gewandhaus Orch/Blomstedt.*

② VKJK0604

Various Cpsrs Three Orgs of the Marienkirche, Lübeck. *Unger.*

② VKJK1122

**RAMÉE** [outhere-music.com/ramee](http://outhere-music.com/ramee)  
Various Cpsrs Amour, viens animer ma voix! - French Bass Cantatas. *Oliveira/Ludovise Ens.*

② RAM1107

**RAUMKLANG** [raumklang.de](http://raumklang.de)  
Various Cpsrs Goldene Schlüsselchen. *Nahörmal Children's Ens/Wolter.*

② RKNH30701

**REGENT** [regent-records.co.uk](http://regent-records.co.uk)  
Various Cpsrs Verses & Voluntaries. *Whitehead.*

② REGCD366

Various Cpsrs Year at Southwark. *Southwark Cath Ch/Disley/ Wright, P.*

② REGCD376

**REGIS** [regisrecords.co.uk](http://regisrecords.co.uk)  
Beethoven Cpte Vc Wks. *Fournier/Gulda.*

② RRC2092

Beethoven Pf Sons Nos 8, 17 & 23. *Richter.*

② RRC1384

Gershwin Orch Wks. *List/Hanson/Dorati.*

② RRC1386

Mozart Pf Conc No 7. Dbl Pf Conc. Dbl Pf Son. *Brendel/Klein, W/ Vienna St Op Orch/Angerer.*

② RRC1388

Shostakovich Sym No 11. *Leningrad PO/Mravinsky.*

② RRC1387

Shostakovich Vn Conc No 1. Vc Conc No 1. *Rostropovich/ Oistrakh/Ormandy/Mravinsky.*

② RRC1385

Various Cpsrs Portrait. *Sutherland.*

② RRC3013

**SFZ MUSIC** [sfzmusic.co.uk](http://sfzmusic.co.uk)  
Adlgasser. Eberlin. L. Mozart Hpd Sons from the Court of Salzburg. *Irving.*

② SFZM0311

**SIGNUM** [signumrecords.com](http://signumrecords.com)  
Brahms Cpte Syms. *Philh Orch/Dohnányi.*

② SIGCD255

Various Cpsrs Chor Tapestry. *Voces 8.*

② SIGCD283

**SILVA SCREEN** [silvascreen.com](http://silvascreen.com)  
Arnold/Price Sherlock - OST. *Various artists.*

② SILCD1383

Beltrami Woman in Black - OST. *Various artists.*

② SILCD1378

**SOLIDEO GLORIA** [solideogloria.co.uk](http://solideogloria.co.uk)  
Brahms Deutsches Requiem (pp2008). *Fuge/Brook/ Monteverdi Ch/ORR/Gardiner.*

② SDG706

**SOMM** [somm-records.com](http://somm-records.com)  
Seiber Chor Wks. 21st Century Ch/Williams, H.

② SOMM0105

**SONIMAGE** [sonimage.co.uk](http://sonimage.co.uk)  
Beethoven Pf Trios - Op 1 No 1; Op 97, 'Archduke'. *Cropper/ Welsh/Roscoe.*

② SON11102

**SONOLUMINUS** [sonoluminus.com](http://sonoluminus.com)  
Various Cpsrs Rupa-Khanda - Perc Wks. *LA Perc Qt.*

② (CD + ) DSL92150

**STONE RECORDS** [stonerecords.co.uk](http://stonerecords.co.uk)  
Dellius Dellius & his Circle. *Guinery.*

② 506019 2780130

Orr, CW Cpte Songbook, Vol 1. *Stone/Lepper.*

② 506019 2780123

**STRADIVARIUS** [stradivarius.it](http://stradivarius.it)  
Piazzolla Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas. *Trio Artelli.*

② STR33913

**SUPRAPHON** [supraphon.com](http://supraphon.com)  
Foerster Cpte Pf Trios. *Janáček Trio.*

② SU4079-2

Gubaidulina Cpte Stg Qts. *Stamič Qt.*

② SU4078-2

**TAHRA** [tahra.com](http://tahra.com)  
Various Cpsrs Unpubd Live Recs (pp1945-65). *Scherchen.*

② TAH729/30

**TELOS**  
Liszt Pf Wks. *Manz.*

② TLS141

Ohana Cpte Pf Wks, Vol 2. *Symeonidis/Werzlau.*

② TLS091

**TOCCATA CLASSICS** [toccataclassics.com](http://toccataclassics.com)  
Bacevičius Cpte Mts. *Alekna/Oppens/Lewis, M.*

② TOCC0134

Raykhelson Vn Conc. Va Conc. *Sachenko/Bashmet/New Russian Orch/Vandelli/Slatkovsky.*

② TOCC0130

Reiner, K Vc Conc. *Foron/Czech PO/Mácal.*

② TOCC0083

Schurmann Wks for Vn & Pf. *Park/Korzhev.*

② TOCC0133

Telemann Harmonischer Gottes-Dienst, Vol 4. *Bergen Barokk.*

② TOCC0084

**TRANSART**  
Chopin Vc Son. Pf Trio. *Charlier/Pierlot, A/Ei Bacha.*

② TR171

**URANIA**  
Dvořák Syms Nos 7-9. *Hallé Orch/Barbirolli.*

② WS121 135

Mahler Sym No 1 Strauss, R Orch Wks. *Pittsburgh SO/Steinberg.*

② WS121 136

Vivaldi Four Seasons. Vn Concs. *Ayo/Garatti/I Musici.*

② WS121 134

**VMS**  
Various Cpsrs Sternstunden Live 1996-2010. *Vorarlberg SO.*

② VMS227

Various Cpsrs 20 Jahre Arpeggione Live. *Arpeggione.*

② VMS228

**WALHALL**  
Donizetti Lucia di Lammermoor (pp1961). *Sols incl Sutherland, Tucker & Moscona/Met Op, New York/Varviso.*

② WLCD0350

Strauss, R Rosenkavalier (pp1961). *Sols incl Crespin, Meyer & Rothenberger/Colón Th, Buenos Aires/Wallberg.*

② WLCD0341

Wagner Tristan und Isolde (pp1961). *Sols incl Liebl, Nilsson & Dalis/Met Op, New York/Rosenstock.*

② WLCD0344

**WERGO** [wergo.de](http://wergo.de)  
Ferrari, L Jetzt. *Ferrari, L & B/Vivant Qt, Narbonne.*

② WER2066-2

**WIGMORE HALL LIVE** [wigmore-hall.org.uk/live](http://wigmore-hall.org.uk/live)  
Schubert Schwanengesang. *Maltman/Johnson.*

② WHLIVE0049

**WINTER & WINTER** [winterandwinter.com](http://winterandwinter.com)  
Vivaldi Four Seasons. *Forma Antiqua/Bleckmann/Caine.*

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PFJ Hi Fi	102
Rayleigh Hi Fi	100
Kirker	97
Classic Direct	92
Jersey Music Festival	92
Lufthansa Baroque Festival	92
Hazard Chase	80
Europadisc	80
Supraphon	75
ICS	74
Bath Compacts	70
Istanbul Music	59
Linn Records	58
Eilat	58
The Sixteen	56
Wyastone Estate	56
London Symphony	52
Channel Classics	48
San Francisco Symphony	48
Hyperion	40
Subscription Offer	32
Eone	30
Caracalla	22
Dutton Vocalion	20
LSO	17
Signum	14
Chandos	13
Profil Medien	9
CS Bedford	8
Universal	7

## North America

USA	
Naxos	ii
Allegro	vii
Sony	viii
Naxos	x
Como Resorts	xii
Music Guide	xvi

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# REVIEWS INDEX

<b>A</b>	<b>Albéniz</b>		<b>Bruckner</b>		Mädchen Wunsch; No 5, Meine Freuden	<b>66</b>	<b>D</b>		<b>55</b>	Nocturne	<b>57</b>	
	Etudes, Op 10 – Nos 2 & 5	<b>66</b>	Symphonies – Nos 3, 4, 5, 7 & 9	<b>84</b>				Piano Trio, Op 120	<b>55</b>	Shades of the Alhambra	<b>57</b>	
	Iberia – Triana	<b>66</b>	Symphonies – Nos 6 & 8	<b>84</b>				Romance, Op 69	<b>54</b>	<b>Hoffmann, GM</b>		
<b>B</b>							<b>Dallapiccola</b>	Capilli, Op 77	<b>55</b>			
	<b>Bach, JS</b>		<b>Carpenter, JA</b>	<b>85</b>				<b>Daugherty</b>	Romance, Op 69	<b>55</b>	Schlage doch, gewünschte Stunde	
	Cantatas – No 54, ‘Widerstehe doch der Stunde’; No 170, Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust, Concerto for Oboe and Violin, after BWV1060	<b>68</b>	Violin Sonata						Romance, Op 69	<b>54</b>	(formerly BWV53) – Aria:	
Cantatas – No 82, Ich habe genug; No 150, Nach dir, Herr, verlanget mich – Sinfonia; No 161, Komm, du süsse Todesstunde – Recitative: Der Schluss ist schon gemacht; No 169, Gott soll allein mein Herze haben; No 200, Bekennen will ich seinen Namen – Aria: Bekennen will ich seinen Namen	<b>68</b>	Armida abbandonata – Sinfonia; Qual da venti combattuta	<b>69</b>			Sérénade, Op 98	<b>55</b>		Schlage doch, gewünschte Stunde	<b>68</b>		
	English Suites, BWV806–11	<b>62</b>	Démophon – Overture II	<b>69</b>			<b>Debussy</b>	Sicilienne, Op 78	<b>54</b>	<b>Hosokawa</b>		
	French Suites, BWV812–17	<b>62</b>	Giulio Sabino – Sinfonia; I mesti affetti miei	<b>69</b>				Suite, ‘Reisado do pastoreio’ – Batucque	<b>53</b>	Ceremonial Dance	<b>46</b>	
	Goldberg Variations, BWV988	<b>62</b>	Ifigenia in Aulide – Turbata ai dubbi accenti	<b>69</b>				Violin Sonata (arr Delsart)	<b>54</b>	Cloud and Light	<b>46</b>	
	Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier, BWV731	<b>44</b>	Mesenzio, re d'Etruria – Sinfonia	<b>69</b>			<b>G</b>			Landscape V	<b>46</b>	
	Recorder Concertos – BWV1053; BWV1055; ‘BWV1059’; after arias from Cantatas Nos 32 & 215 (transc Wind)	<b>44</b>	Requiem in C	<b>85</b>				<b>Gál</b>			Sakura für Otto Tomek	<b>46</b>
	Seven Toccatas, BWV910–16	<b>62</b>	Scena e rondeau – Ti lascio adorato mio ben	<b>69</b>				Fünf Melodien, Op 33	<b>75</b>	<b>Jobim</b>		
	Suite for Violin and Strings, after BWV1067	<b>68</b>	<b>Chopin</b>				<b>Gershwin</b>	Rhapsody in Blue	<b>85</b>	<b>Joplin, S</b>		
	<b>Bartók</b>		Ballade No 3	<b>67</b>				<b>Godowsky</b>		Treemonisha	<b>76</b>	
	String Quartets Nos 1–6	<b>61</b>	Ballade No 4	<b>67</b>				Alt–Wien	<b>60</b>			
	<b>Bate</b>		Barcarolle in F sharp, Op 60	<b>67</b>			<b>Goldschmidt</b>	<b>Granados</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>Koechlin</b>		
	Piano Concerto No 2, Op 28	<b>44</b>	Berceuse, Op 57	<b>66</b>				Allegro de concierto	<b>63</b>	Les heures persanes, Op 65	<b>63</b>	
	Sinfonietta No 1, Op 22	<b>44</b>	Etudes – Opp 10 & 25	<b>67</b>				El Pelele	<b>63</b>	<b>Korngold</b>		
	<b>Beethoven</b>		Etudes (selection)	<b>67</b>			<b>Grosz</b>	Goyescas	<b>63</b>	Songs of the Clown, Op 29	<b>75</b>	
	Piano Sonatas – Nos 4–14	<b>62</b>	Etudes, Op 10 – Nos 2 & 5	<b>66</b>				Valses poéticos	<b>63</b>	<b>Kováč</b>		
	String Quintets – Op 4; Op 29	<b>54</b>	Etudes, Op 25 – No 2	<b>66</b>				<b>Guarnieri, MC</b>		Yiddische Mame	<b>60</b>	
	Symphonies – Nos 1–9	<b>54</b>	Fantasia in F minor, Op 49	<b>67</b>			<b>Guba</b>	Bänkel und Balladen, Op 31 – Bänkel vom Business; Die Ballade vom Seemann Kuttel Daddeldu; Bänkel com Klatsch; Die Ballade vom Sammy Lee	<b>75</b>	<b>Kreisler</b>		
	Symphonies – Nos 5 & 6, ‘Pastoral’	<b>84</b>	Four Ballades	<b>63</b>				Três Danças	<b>53</b>	Caprice viennois	<b>60</b>	
	Symphony No 5	<b>85</b>	Four Scherzos	<b>67</b>				Et especto	<b>46</b>	Marche miniature viennoise	<b>60</b>	
	Symphony No 8	<b>85</b>	Impromptus – Opp 29 & 36	<b>67</b>			<b>Guerra-Peixe</b>	In croce	<b>46</b>	Schön Rosmarin	<b>60</b>	
	Violin Sonata No 5, ‘Spring’	<b>85</b>	Mazurkas – No 16, Op 24 No 3; No 17, Op 24 No 4; No 23, Op 33 No 2; No 25, Op 33 No 4; No 31, Op 50 No 2; No 39, Op 63 No 1; No 41, Op 63 No 3; No 42, Op 67 No 1	<b>66</b>				Kadenza	<b>46</b>	<b>Krieger</b>		
	<b>Berg</b>		Mazurkas (selection)	<b>67</b>				Seven Words	<b>46</b>	Passacalha para o Novo Milênio	<b>53</b>	
	Lytic Suite	<b>61</b>	Mazurkas – No 13, Op 17 No 4; No 45, Op 67 No 4; No 46, Op 68 No 1	<b>63</b>			<b>H</b>	<b>Handel</b>				
	String Quartet, Op 3	<b>61</b>	Mazurkas, Op 30	<b>67</b>				Suite No 5, HWV430 –				
		<b>Brahms</b>		Mazurkas, Op 30	<b>67</b>			<b>Haydn</b>	Air and Variations, ‘The Harmonious Blacksmith’	<b>66</b>		
Symphonies – Nos 1, 3 & 4		<b>85</b>	Nocturnes – No 2, Op 9 No 2; No 8, Op 27 No 2	<b>66</b>			Symphony No 76		<b>84</b>	<b>Lalo</b>		
Violin Concerto		<b>85</b>	Nocturnes (selection)	<b>67</b>			Lucky’s Dream		<b>57</b>	Levy		
	Violin Sonata No 1	<b>85</b>	Nocturnes, Op 27	<b>67</b>			<b>Hayes, M</b>	Lucky’s Speech	<b>57</b>	Sui brésilienne – Samba	<b>53</b>	
	<b>Britten</b>		Nouvelle Etude No 3	<b>66</b>				Lute Stop	<b>57</b>	<b>Liadov</b>		
	Folksong Arrangements – Come you not from Newcastle?; Little Sir William; The Salley Gardens; The Ash Grove; The Last Rose of Summer; The Ploughboy	<b>68</b>	Piano Concerto No 1	<b>67</b>				Port Rhombus	<b>57</b>	A Musical Snuffbox, Op 32	<b>66</b>	
	Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo	<b>68</b>	Piano Concerto No 2	<b>67</b>			<b>Hedelin</b>	Puppet Theatre	<b>57</b>	Prelude, Op 46 No 1	<b>66</b>	
	Symphony for Cello and Orchestra, Op 68	<b>45</b>	Piano Sonata No 3	<b>67</b>				Slippage	<b>57</b>	<b>Liszt</b>		
	Winter Words, Op 52	<b>68</b>	Piano Sonata No 3, Op 58	<b>66</b>				Strides – Books 1 & 2	<b>57</b>	Années de pèlerinage, année 2, Italie, S161 – Three Petrarch Sonnets	<b>47</b>	
	<b>Bruch</b>		Polonaise No 5, Op 44	<b>63</b>			<b>F</b>	Three Distressed Surfaces	<b>57</b>			
	Scottish Fantasy	<b>85</b>	Polonaise–fantaisie, Op 61	<b>67</b>				Violin Concerto	<b>57</b>	A Faust Symphony	<b>47</b>	
			Prelude, Op 45	<b>67</b>					<b>Hayes, M</b>		Hungarian Rhapsodies, S244 – No 1	<b>66</b>
			Preludes, Op 28 – Nos 1, 3, 6, 7, 11, 13, 19, 20 & 23	<b>66</b>			<b>Fauré</b>	Libretto of the Eight Year Old	<b>57</b>	Liebestraüme, S541 – No 3	<b>66</b>	
			Tarantelle, Op 43	<b>66</b>				Mother & Child	<b>54</b>	Organ Works (cpte)	<b>63</b>	
			Tarantelle, Op 43	<b>67</b>						Totentanz, S126	<b>47</b>	
			Waltzes – No 5, Op 42; No 7, Op 64 No 2; No 14, Op posth	<b>66</b>								
			Waltzes – No 6, Op 64 No 1; No 9, Op 69 No 1	<b>63</b>								
			<b>Chopin/Liszt/Rosenthal</b>									
			Chants polonais, S480 – No 1, S481 – No 2	<b>85</b>								







# Ian Rosenblatt

The London lawyer and founder of a recital series on his love of the voice – and on booking the then almost unknown Juan Diego Flórez

I was brought up in Liverpool, where my grandparents were stalwarts of the Liverpool Philharmonic. As a child, I was taken by them every other Saturday night to hear the orchestra perform and I still have very vivid memories of Charles Groves, who was then the conductor. I can still see him with his white beard, and the white dinner jacket he wore in the summer.

There was music playing in my house all the time. My father was the youngest of 12 children and all the brothers sang very well, a few extremely well: singing was treated by my father and his brothers almost as a competitive sport. My father's particular interest was in the singing tradition – anything to do with voices and singers, and so obviously opera. When the Welsh National Opera came on tour to Liverpool, we were always taken to see them. Music was just in the air all the time.

I came to London as a student in 1977 and my first musical experience in London was queuing at Covent Garden for the slips tickets to see *Un ballo in maschera*. The tenor was none other than Luciano Pavarotti. Although he was famous within the opera world, he was not yet a global superstar, although his voice was probably at its best then. I couldn't get over the excitement of being at Covent Garden and seeing him appear – and then going back to my halls of residence and not having anybody to talk to about it, because it wasn't something other students were necessarily interested in.

From my early thirties to mid-forties I took singing lessons every Wednesday from a baritone called John Noble, who died a few years ago – he was the original Pilgrim in *The Pilgrim's Progress* when he was at Cambridge, and in fact he gave me a tape recording of the original performance. I wanted to understand singing, and how the people I was listening to or watching made the noise that they did. And I also wanted to understand the repertoire better. When you study pieces of music, you get to know every single note and every single phrase and understand how the words and music combine, and why the composer might have put *that* note on *that* syllable. From that point of view it was fascinating, though incredibly frustrating, as I was no good at it! I have never ever performed, though one of the spin-offs of my recital series has been that I've got to know an enormous number of the world's greatest singers and some of them have become friends, and, from time to time, in the privacy of my own home, I have knocked out a few notes with a few very well-known names!

It occurred to me that, apart from a song recital at Wigmore Hall and the occasional so-called celebrity recital somewhere, singers just didn't do concerts anymore. I've got plenty of recordings of singers of previous eras who were regularly selling out concert halls and giving concerts. So apart from keeping my fingers crossed that Covent Garden was going to hire great singers all the time, or travelling all over the world, how was



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I going to get to hear these people? Well, the only way to hear them was to put them on!

It began by complete fluke. In '99 José Cura, a tenor who was just breaking through as the new great hope, was appearing at the Royal Festival Hall and someone asked me if I would like to sponsor the concert. It was terrific, and I thought, 'This is what I want to do'. So we started with a pre-series concert in September 2000 at the Royal Albert Hall with Cura and baritone Carlos Álvarez. It was right in the middle of the fuel strike – we were running out of petrol and were worried the orchestra lorry wouldn't even be able to turn up! But it was a great success, and the series began properly in December that year with a tenor called Giuseppe Sabbatini, who had been a huge hero of mine. Then, on a recording of a Donizetti opera that I'd just listened to, singing a minor part, there was this really interesting tenor and I said, 'I'd like to book him please'. It was Juan Diego Flórez. He came in January 2001, before he was famous. I hadn't heard a voice that was that flexible, and also sweet, and able to sing so high without sounding like he was being strangled. It was his debut concert in London – and he was amazing. **G**

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